

# **Journal of European Baptist Studies**

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**Publication – Twice a year**

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ISSN 1213 – 1520 (print)  
ISSN 1804 – 6444 (online)

## **Subscriptions**

International Baptist Theological Study Centre  
Postjesweg 175, 1062 JN Amsterdam, The Netherlands  
<http://www.ibts.eu> | [journal@ibts.eu](mailto:journal@ibts.eu) | +31-20-2103025  
This journal is also available through EBSCO and Harrassowitz.

## **Electronic access**

This journal is indexed in the *ATLA Religion Database*® and it is also included in the full-text *ATLASerials*® (*ATLAS*®) collection.

Both are products of the  
American Theological Library Association  
300 S. Wacker Dr., Suite 2100, Chicago, IL 60606, USA  
<http://www.atla.com> | [atla@atla.com](mailto:atla@atla.com)



# **Journal of European Baptist Studies**

**Volume 17**

**No. 1**

**Spring 2017**

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## Editorial

This edition of JEBS is different and special for two reasons. The first of these is that it represents the somewhat larger format of the Journal as it moves from three to two editions a year. The second is that it includes an article by Keith Jones, the former Rector of IBTS, reporting on the PhD programme and awards that were achieved at IBTS Prague from 1998-2014. Telling this story is important to record and mark the success of this programme, the staff who supervised, and the students who participated.

Following on from the above, this Journal deliberately includes three further articles. Two of these are by successful IBTS Prague PhD graduates. The third is by a student who is now in the IBTSC Amsterdam pre-registration programme. This article was included because of its high quality. It was also included, however, to indicate the ongoing PhD programme of IBTSC Amsterdam in conjunction with the Vrije Universiteit.

In his article Constantine Prokhorov discusses the ‘Eastern Christian Self-Identification of Soviet Baptists in the 1960s-1980s’. For his analysis he particularly draws upon *Bratsky Vestnik* [Fraternal Bulletin], the main official periodical of Soviet Baptists. Accordingly, he argues that the way in which the official publication presented its material indicates a closeness on several matters between Soviet Baptists and Russian Orthodox Christians. Two factors are suggested as influential in this: Communist rule and a shared Slavic spirituality.

With Fran Blomberg’s work we move from Soviet Russia to contemporary Denver, Colorado and a Church expression known as ‘Scum’. In her doctoral work Blomberg argued that five practices in particular could be developed in the context of the church to help young adults recognise and resist the pull of a consumer mentality on themselves and their relationships. In this article she drills down into one of these practices, ‘contentment’, as an expression of the ‘old-time’ habits that have ‘yielded fruit in the lives of young adults immersed in a culture of discontent’.

Caleb Hutcherson takes us in a completely different thematic and geographical direction. He writes: ‘As a theological educator involved in Arab evangelical theological education, understanding the philosophical influences shaping education in Arab contexts is crucial to my task.’ As a consequence, his article focuses upon the eleventh-century Muslim philosopher and theologian Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, a person who many consider ‘to have left a larger imprint on Islamic thought than any other Muslim except the prophet Muhammad’. In this exploration Hutcherson’s

concern is to try and draw out the significance of the nature of this imprint for contemporary Christian theological education in context.

The above articles demonstrate something not simply of the history but of the ongoing diversity and quality of the IBTS PhD programmes and provide an account of varied and interesting research activity.

**Revd Dr Stuart Blythe (Rector IBTSC Amsterdam)**



# A 'Mistake' which Became a Triumph: The Achievements of the IBTS Doctoral Programme 1998-2014

Keith G. Jones

## Introduction

In 1949 the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board began 'an experiment in Christian internationalism'<sup>1</sup> which has so far enjoyed three distinct phases. The institution they established has been known by various terms, from the Baptist Theological Seminary (BTS) to the International Baptist Theological Seminary of the European Baptist Federation (IBTS) and, today, the International Baptist Theological Study Centre, Amsterdam.<sup>2</sup> These differing titles, the adjustments in ownership and the management of the institution can all be explored in detail in works by Carol Woodfin and Keith G. Jones.<sup>3</sup> The original establishment of the institution was at Rüschlikon, Zürich from 1948 until 1996. Then the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board transferred the assets and ownership to the European Baptist Federation, which led to the development of the Jenerálka campus in Praha,<sup>4</sup> Czech Republic, until 2014. The EBF then moved the institution to the Baptist House in Postjesweg, Amsterdam. Each phase has been developmental, but there has been a common desire set out by the very first Rector,<sup>5</sup> George Sadler, to pursue academic excellence in theology for the purpose of equipping the churches of Europe in their mission.

This common driving force has been at the heart of the approach of those who have had responsibility for the institution and those who have taught in the institution. At different moments there have been misguided and ill-informed suggestions that IBTS was 'dumbing down'.<sup>6</sup> In fact, as this

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<sup>1</sup> For the history of IBTS from 1948 until 2013 see the excellent book by Carol Woodfin, *An Experiment in Christian internationalism: a history of the European Baptist Theological Seminary* (Macon, GA: Baptist History and Heritage Society, 2013).

<sup>2</sup> Henceforward in this article I shall simply use the abbreviation IBTS.

<sup>3</sup> See Carol Woodfin, *An Experiment in Christian Internationalism* and Keith G. Jones, *The European Baptist Federation: A Case Study in European Baptist Interdependency 1950-2006* (Milton Keynes: Authentic Media, 2009) especially chapter 4.

<sup>4</sup> In line with IBTS editorial policy I will use the titles of cities as presented in the appropriate language and not an English transliteration.

<sup>5</sup> I use the term 'Rector' here as this is the common term in mainland Europe. The title 'President', a north American term, was used from 1948 until 1998, but the job description has remained similar throughout.

<sup>6</sup> At the time of the adjustment and refocusing of the educational programme in 1997 this criticism was made by R. G. (Gene) Pucket, editor of the North Carolina Biblical Recorder, and his trenchant criticisms

article seeks to demonstrate, IBTS was ramping up its educational provision in the vision of George Sadler and to an educational plain that had proved impossible to obtain in Switzerland.

## **The pursuit of academic excellence**

When George Sadler drew his team together by the side of the Zürichsee in 1948, the intention, as declared to the earlier Baptist World Alliance London Conference,<sup>7</sup> had been to establish a training institution for Baptist pastors from south east Europe. The choice of Switzerland as a venue immediately ensured that the students would be drawn from central, as well as south and south east Europe, so the vision was expanded from the very day that the small faculty took up residence in the Chateau at Rüschlikon.

Sadler, and then Josef Nordenhaug,<sup>8</sup> who succeeded him as Rector, saw that if the churches of central mainland Europe were to be properly served by pastors who were well versed in the classical disciplines of theological education, then aspiration to something beyond a basic foundation certificate, or, at best, an equivalent to a Bachelor's degree in the system of the United States higher education regime, was necessary. Throughout the history of IBTS there have been moments when the clash of terminology and levels of qualification have created tension, confusion, and difficulty for IBTS. The establishment of equivalence has been an enduring challenge to succeeding academic teams as they have engaged with higher education authorities in three specific domains – the north American, the British, and the continental European regimes. Each has its merits, but to range across the three systems,<sup>9</sup> to recruit students from three different domains, and to translate standards and equivalence has proved a challenge, even today when within the European Union the Bologna process<sup>10</sup> seeks to provide just that.

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did long-term damage to the way IBTS was viewed in many Baptist churches in the southern states of the USA. See Woodfin, pp. 314ff.

<sup>7</sup> In 1948 the BWA called together Unions and mission agencies in London to discuss where, how and who should contribute to the re-building of capacity amongst Baptist communities in war-torn Europe. This is explored in Richard V. Pierard (General Editor), *Baptists Together in Christ 1905-2005* (Falls Church, VA: BWA, 2005), see especially chapter 5. Also Woodfin, chapter 1 and Jones, chapter 6.

<sup>8</sup> Dr Josef Nordenhaug, a Norwegian, was previously editor of publications at the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board. His original discipline was in the sciences, but at Southern Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, he gained a doctoral degree in New Testament and Greek.

<sup>9</sup> Not to mention taking on board students from South America and Asia. Indian students, for instance, have often been asked to justify the value of their degree to Serampore College, founded by Carey, Marshman and Ward in 1818, which is the guarantor for Christian higher theological education in India.

<sup>10</sup> The European Union Bologna process seeks to establish an EU-wide, and beyond, approach to higher education with levels of Bachelor (normally three years), Master (two years full time equivalent) and doctoral degrees by dissertation. Despite the governments of all EU nations and many others in Europe (eg Ukraine) signing up to the process, the reality is that there continues to be resistance from academics, some

Sadler and Nordenhaug had both been formed in their theological education through the north American approach and had degrees from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary<sup>11</sup> in Louisville, but from the first they recognised it was important to engage with European higher education. Thus the initial teaching staff at Rüschlikon included notable European scholars such as Arthur B. Crabtree, a British Baptist who, importantly, had a doctoral degree from the University of Zürich, gained under the outstanding scholar, Emil Brunner. Claus Meister, a young Swiss completing his doctoral degree at the University of Basel, was also added to the Faculty<sup>12</sup> and, later, outstanding international scholars such as George Beasley-Murray.<sup>13</sup>

Yet, despite setting high ideals and ensuring the quality of the curriculum of the four-year Bachelor of Divinity, to which was added a Master of Theology (ThM in the IBTS nomenclature) after the first ten years of IBTS, there was a ceiling through which no one could pass. This was because the degrees were not recognised by any Governmental Department of Education, a serious problem in Europe where higher education is controlled and monitored by the State. Issues of the recognition in other countries of degrees awarded by IBTS in Switzerland were partly resolved when the University of Zürich Faculty of Reformed Theology agreed that IBTS graduates as ThM in the upper quartile could proceed to enrol for doctoral studies with the University, providing the ThM had covered appropriate courses in line with what the Faculty itself would require.

## On moving to Praha

When the European Baptist Federation (EBF) was given IBTS by the Southern Baptist International Mission Board<sup>14</sup> in an act of confidence and leadership exhibited by the then Director, Keith Parks, and the Area Director for Europe, Issam Ballenger,<sup>15</sup> Baptists across Europe had to reflect on what

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of whom prefer the Germanic approach of a five-year Magister/Master degree as the entry point, with UK Universities reluctant to entertain the two-year Master's degree of Bologna.

<sup>11</sup> Southern Baptist Theological Seminary is an institution of the Southern Baptist Convention founded in 1859 and was noted for many years as the pre-eminent theological institution within the Convention. It is one of the largest seminaries in the world, claiming to have trained students from 62 countries and all USA States.

<sup>12</sup> On early faculty development see Woodfin, pp. 11ff. Other notable Europeans to serve on the faculty in the period to 1990 were Günter Wagner, Thorwald Lorenzen, and Hans-Harald Mallau.

<sup>13</sup> Paul Beasley-Murray, *Fearless for Truth: A Personal Portrait of the Life of George Beasley-Murray* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2002).

<sup>14</sup> Successor to the Foreign Mission Board.

<sup>15</sup> Both Parks and Ballenger became embroiled in bitter recrimination by Trustees of the International Mission Board and their involvement was terminated in most distressing ways. On the wider battle, see John W Merritt, *The Betrayal: the hostile takeover of the Southern Baptist Convention and a missionary's fight for Freedom in Christ* (Ashville, NC: R. Brent & Company, 2005). For the account from those who

the purpose of the seminary was, where it should be located, and what would be the methods of teaching. In the midst of a Europe being re-formed as the Soviet Empire collapsed and countries entered a new period of self-determination and freedom, the expansion of the European Community (later to be the European Union) and many other issues affected decision-making and, indeed, refinement of the programme and purpose of IBTS. So many concerns occupied meetings of the EBF Councils in Varna, Bulgaria (1991); High Leigh, England<sup>16</sup> (1992); Kishinev, Moldova (1993); Tallinn, Estonia (1994) and Vinodolovsky, Croatia (1997) that the then leader of the German Baptist Union, Eckhard Schaefer, described issues around IBTS as like being on a 'slalom ski course'.<sup>17</sup>

With hindsight it can be seen that countless difficult and complex issues were affecting European Baptist life and IBTS as an institution all at one time. Nevertheless, throughout it all, the Trustees of IBTS sought to hold true to the Sadler vision of a quality academic theological programme to equip pastors, missionaries, and seminary teachers for a rapidly transforming European and Middle East<sup>18</sup> mission reality. How this was to be achieved proved a challenge.

Initial conversations before moving to Praha included detailed discussions with the Protestant or Evangelical Faculty of the historic Charles University.<sup>19</sup> The Protestant Faculty had offered an enhanced version of the University of Zürich arrangement, whereby a student completing a five-year Master's degree validated internally by IBTS to appropriate upper quartile standards could be admitted to the Faculty doctoral programme, with a supervision team which could include an IBTS faculty member who had a full doctor of philosophy degree from a suitable institution.<sup>20</sup> What was clear to many in the EBF was that such a classic requirement of a five-year Master's level degree covering all the traditional departments in theology with a heavy accent on learning Biblical languages no longer fitted the missional reality of the new Europe. The emerging free national Unions of

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disliked the policies of the Board and had a distrust of IBTS, see Paul Pressler, *A Hill on Which to Die* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1999).

<sup>16</sup> For accuracy, though the EBF Council was hosted by the Baptist Union of Great Britain, which has its national resource and offices in Didcot, the actual venue for meetings was High Leigh in Hertfordshire and not Didcot, as stated by Woodfin, p. 209.

<sup>17</sup> Woodfin, p. 312.

<sup>18</sup> Though the owners of IBTS are the European Baptist Federation (EBF), the member bodies of EBF in the 1990s stretched from North Cape, Norway to Egypt in northern Africa and from the Azores to the Pacific including countries such as Turkey, Israel, Armenia, Iraq, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan.

<sup>19</sup> Charles University is one of the oldest in central Europe, founded in 1346 by the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles IV. After the collapse of communism in the Velvet Revolution of 1990 three Faculties of Theology – Catholic, Hussite and Protestant – were readmitted to the University having been ejected after the Second World War by the communist government.

<sup>20</sup> This agreement was signed by the Dean of the Faculty and the Rector of IBTS, Dr John David Hopper. It is held in the archives of IBTS, Baptist House, Postjesweg, Amsterdam.

the former communist empire saw as a prime need the establishment of national seminaries offering theological and ministerial formation at Bachelor's level, relevant and applicable to their own context.

What was needed from an EBF institution was a programme to offer potential lecturers and instructors in the national seminaries internationally recognised higher degrees that would enable national seminaries to gain governmental approval and status. Inherent to this was having a focus on mission and applied theology to meet the challenges of the day.

The debate to address this mismatch took time and on the journey several influential and critical people suffered health and emotional challenges and some withdrew from the debate. The challenge to find a way forward was one demanding energy of the Trustees of IBTS, the EBF Executive Committee and officers, and the small academic staff being assembled in Praha.

## Significant help

The new academic leadership of IBTS consisted of three people: Keith G. Jones, Davorin Peterlin, and David M. Brown.<sup>21</sup> These three began the search for a solution and it was generally agreed that the most favourable possibility was the attitude of the United Kingdom Government, which permitted some State Universities to validate programmes both within and outside the British isles.<sup>22</sup> At that time three British Baptist Colleges had such validated arrangements with two different Universities, the federal University of Wales and the Victoria University of Manchester<sup>23</sup>.

Tentative approaches were made to both institutions. IBTS was, at this point, in a fragile and vulnerable position. The Board of Trustees agreed the University of Wales would be approached, using Spurgeon's College as an intermediary. Initially, Professor D. P. Davies, a member of the Lampeter Theology Faculty of the university and Chair of the Validation Board, agreed it could be possible to construct an agreement with IBTS to be allowed to teach Master's degrees which were already validated to Spurgeon's College as a secondary, or subsidiary institution, part quality controlled by the larger London-based institution.

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<sup>21</sup> Rector, the Revd Keith G. Jones (Great Britain), Pro-Rector, Dr Davorin Peterlin (Croatia), Director of Education and Studies, Dr David M. Brown (American Baptist Churches International Ministries, USA).

<sup>22</sup> Terminology for the collection of islands on the edge of the European peninsula is difficult to be precise about. Here reference is primarily to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

<sup>23</sup> Spurgeon's College and the South Wales Baptist College related to the University of Wales. Northern Baptist College had degrees validated by the University of Manchester.

This in itself required an amazing act of generosity by the then Principal of Spurgeon's College, the Revd Michael J. Quicke,<sup>24</sup> but he readily gave the arrangement his blessing, asking his deputy, Dr Martin Selman, to take the lead in negotiations.

Professor D. P. Davies<sup>25</sup> proved to be a man of vision and an outstanding friend of IBTS from his first visit in 1998, through until after his retirement from university life in the mid-2000s. He came to IBTS, Praha, with his team from the Validation Board and Martin Selman, on behalf of Spurgeon's, was also present. As discussions proceeded, a review of the campus, time spent in the amazing library<sup>26</sup> and talking with the IBTS academic team, Professor Davies finally asked: "But why are you seeking this arrangement to teach degrees validated to Spurgeon's and why should you not teach them directly?" The question prompted the response that we could not imagine the University of Wales, which at that time had a major engagement with validation, allowing direct validation of degrees with IBTS, which was emerging from a challenging adventure in relocation and refocusing the academic programme to meet emergent needs in a transformed European scene.

Professor Davies took the view that direct validation was appropriate, especially as we had reached agreement with Michael Quicke at Spurgeon's that they would release Dr Martin J. Selman to help us with Old Testament modules and Hebrew and Dr Ian M. Randall to resource us in delivery of the largely on-line and workbook modelled degree in Baptist and Anabaptist studies (the two start-up degrees with which it had been decided to re-launch the re-focused IBTS).

Martin Selman was greatly trusted by the University of Wales and his commitment to this project was much appreciated by Davorin Peterlin, David Brown, and myself. Sadly, ill health prevented his involvement with us over an extended period, but his advice, support, and commitment at that time marks him out as a fine Christian scholar to whom IBTS remains deeply indebted. A side effect was that Martin's commitment also prompted Dr Ian Randall to take an increased interest in the work and in the years that followed Ian developed a deep and continuing relationship with IBTS. He swapped roles between Spurgeon's and IBTS, coming and living in Praha

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<sup>24</sup> The Revd Michael J. Quicke was the then Principal of Spurgeon's College, London.

<sup>25</sup> Professor D. P. Davies is a New Testament scholar, an Anglican by tradition, but profoundly at home amongst Baptists.

<sup>26</sup> The IBTS library established in 1948 around collections of libraries from retired pastors had grown by hard work, careful purchasing, and the engagement of Günter Wagner, Thorwald Lorenzen and H. Wayne Walker Pipkin in astute purchasing to a formidable collection. Whilst in Praha it was acknowledged as a premier theological library outside of the largest Universities, surpassing libraries of much larger institutions than IBTS and with specialist features in Anabaptist history, mission, and applied and dogmatic theology.

with his wife, Janice, serving as Director in Anabaptist and Baptist studies, supervising doctoral students, serving as Academic Dean, and acting as mentor to several of us who needed to learn our way around British higher education administration.

In the meantime, we also extended approaches to the Partnership for Theological Education in Manchester, whose Principal was Dr David R. Goodbourn.<sup>27</sup> So, IBTS became a member of the Partnership to gain access to their Master of Arts in Mission, validated by the prestigious University of Manchester,<sup>28</sup> which was to be the third plank in the programmes offered to the EBF family.

It is one thing to have good visits, especially in the field of validation, but it is another very necessary step to receive the legal documentation. Professor D. P. Davies and his visitation team assured the University that IBTS was indeed a viable partner with an outstanding library, a good academic team, and with reliable part-time and own-time academic back-up, spearheaded by the generosity of Michael Quicke at Spurgeon's<sup>29</sup> in making available Martin Selman and Ian Randall.

The legal documentation duly arrived, permitting the teaching, marking, and dissertation assessment for the degree of Master of Theology in Biblical Studies and also in Baptist and Anabaptist Studies. A third legal document also arrived, permitting the supervision of doctoral students in the related subject areas and more generally in theology. Professor Davies had been more than impressed by IBTS. He had been bowled over by the campus, the library, the academic team and, indeed, the good Czech beer. From then on he took every possible opportunity to visit us, support us and to encourage, especially, students in the doctoral programme. Some might have viewed that third legal document as a 'mistake', but for D. P. Davies, he had confidence IBTS could achieve much more.

## Developing a doctoral programme

This agreement to supervise doctorates filled the vision for which George Sadler had been aiming in 1949. No longer did we have to create proto-doctoral students to fulfil the criteria of the University of Zürich or Charles

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<sup>27</sup> David R. Goodbourn became another trusted friend of IBTS, helping us in our educational methods and at a crucial moment heading up the task group which proposed moving from the Praha campus to Amsterdam. Another person who, like Martin Selman, made a powerful difference behind the scenes.

<sup>28</sup> The University of Manchester has a long record of excellence in theological education. The University currently ranks number 29 in the QS world university rankings.

<sup>29</sup> Michael Quicke was Principal of Spurgeon's College and later moved on to be Professor of Preaching at Northern Baptist Seminary in Chicago and was replaced by the Revd Dr Nigel G. Wright. Nigel proved to be every bit as supportive as Michael and added to our joys later by being a regular visitor, examiner, and lecturer for IBTS.

University, Praha. No, from 1999 until 2014 the programme, the admissions policy and the supporting mentoring, supervision, and review processes were in the hands of IBTS, though naturally subject to the approval of the Validation Board of the University of Wales and the standards laid down for all United Kingdom Universities by the Quality Assurance Agency of the British government. To have such a programme was almost unbelievable. To admit students who might complete such a programme was challenging. The starting point was with our own graduates and within our faculty team. The aspiration of the IBTS Directorate was to have an academic team where everyone had an earned doctorate in the relevant discipline area. Enrolment was slow and cautious. Finding supervisors could be a challenge.

Three developments here need to be noted which changed the dynamics. Firstly, the University of Manchester had a bad experience of a validation partner in another country in a non-theological field failing to deliver to an appropriate standard. The University Vice Chancellor decided he must protect the University and that no non-UK validation partners could be entertained. We were, therefore, asked to withdraw from the Partnership for Theological Education in Manchester and lost our access to the MA in Mission.<sup>30</sup> This was something of a blow to IBTS, but Professor Davies proposed that Wales take over our MA in Mission module structure and that it become an MTh in Contextual Mission validated by the University of Wales and that missiology students could be admitted to the doctoral programme.

Secondly, David Brown said he now could see that IBTS was on an even keel and he ought to withdraw and return to the USA so that a European could be appointed to the post he had held. The title was adjusted to Director of Applied Theology and a search was launched. Dr Wesley H. Brown, an American Baptist Churches International Ministries missionary working with the EBF and based in Praha, suggested we might want to consider interviewing Dr Parush R. Parushev, a Bulgarian working on his theology doctorate at Fuller Seminary. Several applicants emerged, but Parush Parushev was head and shoulders above them in terms of gifting, theological thought, and understanding of academic organisation.<sup>31</sup> His arrival at IBTS featured the application of insights learnt from his previous academic life, which created the unique doctoral programme.

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<sup>30</sup> With the passing of years, events can change. Manchester now has a large validation programme and has been pleased to validate the MA offered by the IBTS Centre in Amsterdam, so a full circle has been achieved.

<sup>31</sup> Parush R. Parushev had a first academic career in applied mathematics and robotics. He is a member of the Bulgarian Academy of Science and a docent in his field. He then changed disciplines on becoming a Christian and has acquired first class degrees in theology through to a highly rated doctoral degree. He is a polymath fluent in several languages and a source of great knowledge. He is currently Rector of St Trivellius Higher Theological Institute in Sofia, Bulgaria.

Thirdly, Ian and Janice Randall decided to flip the balance of responsibilities and living arrangements, moving to the IBTS campus with Ian commuting to look after his doctoral students in London. He brought with him a wealth of supervision experience and an amazing ability to chivvy on reluctant students to research, write, draft, assemble, and refine their work to a viable timetable.

## **Equipped to engage**

These three events created a scenario where we could offer to our graduating Master's students the possibility of entering a doctoral programme to gain the all-important qualification to impress their home governments and Unions. It developed a team work approach which saw the establishment of supervisory teams and the ability to create strategies and documentation to support students with periodic reviews, to develop forward targets and recruit specialist supervisors from across Europe and the USA who understood our vision and were pleased that what Sadler and Nordenhaug could only dream of, could come to pass.

It is very easy to underestimate the intellectual rigour, careful construction, and sheer determination which were needed to bring about a way of delivering a doctoral programme, which in due course became a standard by which other validated institutions of the University of Wales were judged. The heart of it became, and, indeed, still is, the doctoral colloquium where supervisors, candidates, advisors, independent academic assessors, and interested guests sat round a large rectangle of tables in the IBTS chapel in Jenerálka and for over a week listened to presentations on progress to date. Each student was first questioned by those in the supervisory team (as the system developed generally three in number: the lead promoter with University responsibility, a generalist supervisor, and a specialist advisor), then the field was thrown open for anyone in the room to ask a question, search for a problematic hole in the reasoning and generally seek to ensure no stone was left unturned in the search for academic excellence.

Here tribute must be paid not only to the on-site IBTS team, which had grown with Peter Penner,<sup>32</sup> a missiologist, Ivana Noble,<sup>33</sup> a theologian with deep doctrinal insights, Tim Noble,<sup>34</sup> a missiologist with experience in

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<sup>32</sup> Peter F. Penner served in two capacities on the IBTS directorate – in Mission and Biblical Studies. A Mennonite by background, he continues to work in Austria in theological education.

<sup>33</sup> The Revd Professor Ivana Noble is a Hussite priest who works with IBTS and has supported our theological education for many years. Her contribution to the theological developments at IBTS is very significant.

<sup>34</sup> Dr Tim Noble was a Jesuit missionary and his own doctorate was on liberation theology. His support of IBTS in many different ways has been very important in developing and sustaining our concepts of mission.

Latin America, but also people like J. Andrew Kirk,<sup>35</sup> a retired missiologist who was totally dedicated to the enterprise, Simon J Oxley,<sup>36</sup> a theological educationalist who had served on the World Council of Churches staff, the Revd Dr Jim Purves, on the staff of the Baptist Union of Scotland, and Professor J. H. Y. Briggs,<sup>37</sup> a noted English Baptist historian.

## **And the students?**

In the period from 1998 until 2014 thirty students graduated with the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, none was lost on the way! It more than matches the output of any other Baptist institution in Europe<sup>39</sup> in the same period. The doctoral students came from thirteen different nations. Five were women. Whilst several of the dissertations were cross-disciplinary, we might group them as approximately nine in baptistic history, seven in practical theology, eight in missiology, two in Biblical hermeneutics, two in spirituality, and two in pastoral theology. However, most crossed more than one discipline.

Whilst issues associated with baptistic life from within the European Baptist Federation community predominated, the doctoral programme received students from Africa and the Americas. Not all the students were Baptists. Within the doctoral group we had Mennonites, free evangelicals, a Pentecostal, and a member of the Evangelical Czech Brethren Church.<sup>40</sup>

## **Themes of dissertations**

I have outlined approximate clusters of themes, but will now turn to more specific reflection on topic matter. Naturally, given the interest of IBTS in Baptist history and identity, no fewer than fifteen of the dissertations

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<sup>35</sup> The Revd Dr J. Andrew Kirk is a retired Anglican missionary who served in Latin America and later in the Selly Oak Colleges, Birmingham. He is a prolific author.

<sup>36</sup> The Revd Dr Simon J. Oxley has specialised in adult Christian education. He was a senior staff member with the World Council of Churches and now semi-retired continues to lecture on ecumenism in the Luther King House (LKH) Educational Partnership, Manchester.

<sup>37</sup> J. H. Y. Briggs served in the University of Keele, Westhill College, and University of Birmingham. He was a member of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches and is a prolific author.

<sup>38</sup> PhD of the University of Wales by dissertation and oral examination (viva voce).

<sup>39</sup> The list of Baptist institutions in Europe with the right to take people through doctoral studies to the point of examination and award is very limited. The Baptist Faculty of the University of Bucharest is one such, plus Bristol Baptist College, Spurgeon's College, South Wales Baptist College, Regent's Park College (Oxford), Northern Baptist College within the LKH Partnership and the Irish Baptist College as part of Queen's University, Belfast.

<sup>40</sup> The Czech Hussite Church was created in the first Czechoslovak Republic after World War 1 and initially consisted of liberal Catholics. It has remained an independent Christian World Communion with a Faculty in the Charles University, Prague. It is a member church of the Community of Protestant churches in Europe (CPCE) and the Conference of European Churches (CEC).

explored baptistic identity over against that of other groupings, some Christian, others secular, in society.

Matters of ecclesiology and baptistic ways of doing things and being church were explored in a variety of contexts, not least in relationship to dominant ecclesial groups in particular settings, such as the Orthodox churches in eastern Europe. Two studies explored the place of women within baptistic communities, especially those who are single. Countries singled out for particular attention included Estonia, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Russia, and Ukraine.

### **What happened to our graduates?**

When governmental quality assurance agencies conduct investigations of higher education providers, a constant theme is the issue of 'outcomes'. What happened to those who graduated? Have they been of any constructive use in society? Has their research benefitted the societies to which they returned? These questions are often answered easily by the providers of science, technology, medical, and management education, but are more nebulous in the realm of the arts and humanities. Nevertheless, one key outcome which belongs to the concern of the European Baptist Federation Council was to provide developmental capacity for the churches through providing those who would engage in further and higher education in their countries of domicile and those who would enable the church in its missionary task.

By these criteria IBTS has had excellent 'outcomes'. Of the thirty graduates, at least twenty have assumed positions of academic teaching within further and higher education serving the churches. Six have been appointed to lead or to be a deputy or assistant at university sector educational institutions. Several have been missional pioneers in developing contemporary forms of church life, and others have served in leadership capacities in local congregations. As eight of the thirty have graduated in the last three years, we anticipate seeing further development in the number of those called into significant leadership positions within theological education.

### **Supervisory teams**

The standard supervisory team required by the University of Wales varied over the period from 1998 until 2016. Ultimately, the norm was three people. This, inevitably, meant that the small IBTS core academic and adjunct academic team had to draw on resources from elsewhere and in total twenty-

four individuals served in a supervisory capacity in respect of these thirty graduates. From beyond the core team at IBTS we were privileged to have support from such noted figures as the Revd Dr J. Andrew Kirk, Bishop Herman Browne (Anglican World Communion), Dr Stuart Murray Williams (a leading Anabaptist scholar and author), Dr Pamela Durso (a Baptist historian from the southern USA), Professor Nancey Murphy (Fuller Seminary, Pasadena), the Revd Alec Gilmore (author and editor, UK), Dr Valentine Kozhuharov (Bulgaria), Dr Valerie Rempel (USA), Dr Ted Koontz (USA), the Revd Dr Stephen Finamore (Principal, Bristol Baptist College, UK), Dr Sergey N. Sannikov (Ukraine), Dr Danut Manasireanu (Romania), Professor Glen Stassen (Fuller Seminary, Pasadena), and Dr Walter Sawatsky (USA).

## **External Examiners**

The most common examination system in the United Kingdom, by which the University of Wales operated, involves an Examination Board of three individuals: a Chair, an Internal Examiner<sup>41</sup> and an External Examiner, who is a specialist in the research area. Given the divergence of our research topics, both by discipline and country setting, the task of creating Examination Boards capable of fulfilling the rigorous requirements of the University and the United Kingdom Quality Assurance Agency was, in itself, a great challenge. We are immensely grateful to the external examiners who answered our call for assistance including Professor Alan Sell, the Revd Dr Keith Clements, the Revd Dr Derek J. Tidball, Professor Riho Alturnume, Professor Linda Cannell, Professor Jan Lašek, Professor Craig Evans, Professor I. Howard Marshall, Professor Andrew Walls, Professor Otniel Bunaciu, the Revd Dr Nicholas J. Wood, the Revd Dr Karen Smith, Professor David Bebbington, Dr Maurice Dowling, Dr David Clough, Dr Philip Boobyer, the Revd Dr Christopher J. Ellis, Professor Elaine Graham, Dr Helen Costigane, Dr Cathy Ross, the Revd Dr Stephen Holmes, The Revd Dr Ian Paul, the Revd Dr Stephen Wright, Dr Michael Barnes, Dr Geordan Hammond, the Revd Dr Richard J. Kidd, Dr John Wolffe, Dr Douglas Gay, Professor Peter Ward.

To those who know something of the world of theological, mission, and ecclesial studies the list of External Examiners reads as a litany of world-class scholars and IBTS remains grateful for their commitment to the examination process which, in every instance, was conducted with due diligence.

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<sup>41</sup> Internal in this sense meant an academic of a constituent part of the University of Wales or a validated institution of the University of Wales. IBTS could not have created specialist Examination Boards without this provision, having only a small Faculty and adjunct staff.

## At the heart of it all

Producing a work of approximately 100,000 words which has original research and reflection and is capable of being assessed as being worthy of a doctorate from a major University is, of course, a triumph for each of the thirty individuals who are now allowed to wear the Cambridge doctoral style crimson academic robe with faculty colour facings and a 'mazarin blue shot red silk'<sup>42</sup> hood of the University of Wales.<sup>43</sup> We salute each one of them. However, what must not be forgotten is the work of supporting the research and writing, not only of the supervisory team, but the immense task of registering, reviewing and updating records, of ensuring University administrative reporting and reviewing requirements are fully met so that there might be no impediment to the successful outcome of study.

## Administration and Quality Assurance

The small institution which was IBTS always had to meet every administrative, regulatory, and academic criterion of larger institutions. This heavy workload was overseen by four successive Academic Deans who gave unstintingly of their time to ensure all was done decently and in good order, whilst carrying research and teaching loads within their own domain. Davor Peterlin commenced this work, having completed doctoral studies in Aberdeen with the renowned New Testament scholar, I. Howard Marshall. Ian Randall continued in this tradition and alongside this role, in addition to supervision and teaching, had an amazing output of articles and books on a diverse range of Baptist and evangelical history. Parush Parushev brought to the task his experience in the world of mathematics and biomechanics. Drawing on this background in Bulgaria and Russia he developed a comprehensive policy for managing and recording the research work of each student, focused around the ground-breaking research colloquium held each January in Praha and now in Amsterdam.<sup>44</sup> These established practices were continued by Lina Andronovienė<sup>45</sup> when he assumed the Rectorship in 2013.

The work of registration and academic management of the paper flow associated with the doctoral programme has rested with three individuals: Antonija Lucic, Lydia Kucová and Norbert Csenyi, all academics in their

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<sup>42</sup> Description taken from *Shaw's Academic Dress of Great Britain and Ireland*, ed. by Nicholas Groves, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn (London: Burgon Society, 2001), p. 410.

<sup>43</sup> Many of our graduates wear this academic dress with pride in the institutions where they now teach on appropriate occasions such as commencement, graduation day and the like and their images can be found on social media.

<sup>44</sup> This paper is being completed even as social media records the travel of students from Australia, Canada, central Asia, and every part of Europe to the 2017 International Colloquium in the Baptist House, Amsterdam.

<sup>45</sup> Now the Revd Dr Lina Toth, Assistant Principal of the Scottish Baptist College, University of the West of Scotland.

own right and at various points students of IBTS. To them fell the task of completion of documentation, pressing students to submit relevant details, and harrying supervisors to complete reports — which has always been done with grace and charm.

Such was the quality of the IBTS programme and administrative support that in 2005 the Rector, Keith Jones, was appointed to the Research Degree Board of the University of Wales to represent the validated institutions, recognising that IBTS had an approach to doctoral studies which added value to the approach of the University.

### **The Directorate, the core team, and key adjunct colleagues**

Each of those who served in the IBTS Directorate from 1998 until 2014 demonstrated a commitment to the doctoral programme alongside the basic task assigned by the EBF Council to IBTS in 1997 of delivering a series of Master's programmes which were European in form.<sup>46</sup> In that sense, the doctoral programme was an unexpected add-on, which proved to be of lasting value and significance.

It would be invidious to single out any one person or persons as having made a unique contribution. The Academic Dean has been identified, for around that individual so much cohered, yet the Academic Deans were supported by other members of the Academic Team and adjunct academic staff, all of whom made important contributions. Here they are listed alphabetically as a point of note and reference for those in future who wonder who contributed to this significant achievement:

Professor John H. Y. Briggs (United Kingdom)

The Revd Dr Cheryl Brown (USA)

The Revd Dr David M. Brown (USA)

The Revd Dr Wesley H. Brown (USA)

Dr René Erwich (Netherlands)

Dr David R. Goodbourn (United Kingdom)

The Revd Dr Darrell Jackson (Australia)

The Revd Dr Keith G. Jones (United Kingdom)

The Revd Professor Dr Andrew J. Kirk (United Kingdom)

Dr Lydia Kucová (Czech Republic)

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<sup>46</sup> The European Union Bologna programme was taken to be the key base line in order to ensure Master's graduates from IBTS had portable qualifications within greater Europe and the Middle East.

The Revd Professor Nancey Murphy (USA)  
The Revd Professor Ivana Noble (Czech Republic)  
Dr Timothy F. J. Noble (United Kingdom)  
The Revd Dr Simon J. Oxley (United Kingdom)  
The Revd Docent Dr Parush R. Parushev (Bulgaria)  
The Revd Dr Peter F. Penner (Kazakhstan)  
The Revd Dr J. M. G. Purves (Scotland)  
Dr Davorin Peterlin (Croatia)  
Dr Einicke Pilli (Estonia)  
Dr Toivo Pilli (Estonia)  
Professor Wiard Popkes (Germany)  
The Revd Dr Ian M. Randall (United Kingdom)  
The Revd Professor Glen H. Stassen (USA)  
The Revd Dr Lina Toth (Lithuania)

### **Support from the Board of Trustees**

From the moment the legal document arrived from the University of Wales, providing for the supervision of students on appropriate disciplines for the submission of dissertations for doctoral degrees, the Board of Trustees was presented with a challenge. This development was beyond what had been envisaged in 1997, but the Board under the leadership of a succession of chairs, took the development as a positive and important thing for the European Baptist community and embraced the opportunity with open arms. Leadership of the Board over this period rested with four people in succession who had every confidence in the Directorate of IBTS and encouraged them to proceed to develop the programme, recognising that extra work ensued for those involved. This attitude of support proved vital in the wider domain of the EBF, as though the doctoral programme fulfilled the aspirations of Sadler and Nordenhaug, it was, perhaps, beyond the remit envisaged by the EBF Council in 1997. Each year the Chair of the Board would report on the success of the doctoral programme to the EBF Council and ensure the backing of the Council for the ongoing support and recruitment of students. To these individuals who chaired the Board of Trustees during this momentous period thanks are also due:

The Revd Johnny Jonsson (Sweden)  
The Revd Dr Emanuel Wieser (Austria)

The Revd Dr Ruth M. B. Gouldbourne (United Kingdom)

The Revd Dr John D. Weaver (United Kingdom)

## **Conclusion**

Whether the University lawyers made a mistake, or whether it was the confidence in IBTS demonstrated by Professor D. P. Davies may never be known. An answer may lie deep in the archives of the Registry of the University of Wales. Yet, the opportunity was taken and an astonishingly productive period ensued, with thirty people now serving the church in its life and mission throughout the world.

IBTSC continues with a Master's programme validated by the University of Manchester which is accepted by the Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, as an entry to the doctoral programme of that University. Supervisory teams made up of Professors from the University and designated staff of IBTSC continue to offer the opportunity to baptistic scholars and others to gain a qualification which opens up a world of possibilities to serve the people of God in their mission.

## **Acknowledgement**

I am grateful to my friends and colleagues, the Revd Dr Lina Toth, the Revd Dr Parush R. Parushev, and the Revd Dr Ian M. Randall for their help in the writing of this article. Any errors within the article are mine, but it could not have been written without their support, corrections, and reflections.

**The Revd Dr Keith G. Jones served as Rector at IBTS from 1998-2013.**

## **Eastern Christian Self-Identification of Soviet Baptists in the 1960s-1980s**

Constantine Prokhorov

### **Introduction**

In the postwar years, the USSR strictly adhered to a policy of isolationism, protecting from Western countries by the ‘Iron Curtain’. In addition to the numerous political, economic, historical, cultural, and other consequences, this situation contributed to the formation of so-called ‘late’ Soviet Baptists (Baptists of the late Soviet period), only vaguely reminiscent of Western evangelical churches. For a long time the Communists artificially separated the Soviet Protestants from their Western co-religionists and subjected to persecution and discrimination any religious community in the Soviet Union. This inadvertently created the conditions under which the Orthodox and Evangelical Christians-Baptists – the representatives of the largest Christian denominations in the country – paradoxically were closer to each other.

The most important differences between the Protestant West and the Orthodox East were already clearly visible in the ‘Protestant East’. The friendly and respectful relations – at all levels – among many representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church and evangelicals in the USSR in the Khrushchev and Brezhnev years, coupled with a specific foreign policy of the Soviet state, pushed the AUCECB<sup>1</sup> almost to a Slavophile, anti-Western position. This article explores some manifestations of this trend, particularly as reflected in *Bratsky Vestnik* [Fraternal Bulletin], the main official periodical of Soviet Baptists.

### **Russian Orthodox and Baptists: greetings in *Bratsky Vestnik***

During the 1960s to 1980s, *Bratsky Vestnik* regularly published Easter and Christmas greetings from Russian Orthodox Church leaders, as well as favourable messages in response on behalf of the AUCECB. There is no evidence to suggest that this was being done only formally; the greetings conveyed sincere mutual liking. The words of welcome, articles, and commentaries included in *Bratsky Vestnik* from Baptists outside the USSR decreased markedly, while the Russian Orthodox presence in *Bratsky*

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<sup>1</sup> All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, the official association of Baptist communities in the USSR (since 1944).

*Vestnik* increased. In part this was due to the influence of the Soviet power, which pressurised Orthodox and Baptists to ‘struggle for peace’ together on the world stage.<sup>2</sup> At the same time the Communist influence should not be exaggerated, since the peak of brotherly trends in relations between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Baptist communities came in the period of *perestroika* (religious freedom) in the Soviet Union, when the government already did not interfere in the affairs of the church and did not censor the Christian press.

Reading the holiday messages in *Bratsky Vestnik* in the 1970s and 1980s, addressed to AUCECB, one can see a gradual development and strengthening of the Eastern hierarchical paradigm in the presentation of material. The greetings sent to the AUCECB at the major Christian festivals that were published in *Bratsky Vestnik* during the 1960s to 1980s followed a certain order: primacy was usually given to greetings from the Patriarch of All Russia,<sup>3</sup> then some Orthodox Metropolitans followed,<sup>4</sup> next some Russian Baptist ministers conveyed good wishes, and finally greetings from Western Christians were included. At Easter in 1989, for example, *Bratsky Vestnik* carried extended compliments from Patriarch Pimen of Moscow and All Russia, and then briefer greetings from Metropolitan Filaret of Minsk and Belorussia, Metropolitan Alexey of Leningrad and Novgorod, and Metropolitan Yuvenaly of Krutitsy and Kolomna. It was only at this point that Russian Baptist leaders featured: Ya.K. Dukhonchenko, G.I. Komendant, V.S. Glukhovsky and M.V. Melnik. Then, after brief words from the Orthodox Archbishop Makary, there was a final list:

In addition, the [AUCECB] was sent holiday greetings from: the Baptist World Alliance, the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Christian Peace Conference, the European Baptist Federation, Dr. J. Akers, the Billy Graham Association, Pastor S. Park, Presbyterian Church of South Korea, the Society of Friends (Quakers) in the United States of America, the Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women, and others.<sup>5</sup>

This example from 1989, by which time *Bratsky Vestnik* did not need to take into account what the Communists thought about the Baptist periodical including (or not including) greetings from the West, indicated something of the genuine priorities of AUCECB leaders. Despite the lack of Communist anti-Western pressure in this period, the letters and telegrams from outside

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<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, M. Shkarovsky, *Russkaya Pravoslavnyaya Tserkov' pri Staline i Khrushcheve* [The Russian Orthodox Church under Stalin and Khrushchev] (M.: Krutitskoe Patriarshee Podvor'e, 1999), pp. 314-31; 'Golos Khristian v Zashchitu Mira' [Voice of Christians in Defence of Peace] (editorial article), *Bratsky Vestnik* [BV – below], no. 2 (1976), pp. 5-8.

<sup>3</sup> See, for instance, BV, no. 2 (1975), p. 13; no. 3 (1975), p. 11; no. 3 (1979), p. 40; no. 3 (1988), p. 24.

<sup>4</sup> See, for instance, BV, no. 3 (1982), pp. 40-2; no. 3 (1976), pp. 9-10; no. 3 (1987), pp. 37-8; no. 3 (1988), pp. 24-5.

<sup>5</sup> 'Paskhal'nye Privetstviya i Pozdravleniya, Prislannye v Adres VSEHB' [Easter Greetings and Compliments Sent to the AUCECB], BV, no. 3 (1989), pp. 36-8.

Russia, including greetings from the Baptist World Alliance and the European Baptist Federation, were mentioned in *Bratsky Vestnik* but were not quoted.<sup>6</sup> By contrast, the words of the Russian Orthodox leaders were quoted in full.

Moreover, in publishing Russian Orthodox messages, the editorial board of *Bratsky Vestnik* quite often closed their eyes in the 1970s and 1980s to some statements that, from the point of view of traditional Baptist beliefs, were highly controversial. In 1978, for example, this Christmas greeting was published:

To the president of the AUCECB, A.E. Klimenko, ‘... May our great God, incarnate of the Holy Spirit and Mary Ever-Virgin, give you unbounded Christmas joy, abundant grace, bless you with a long life and grant much success in your ministry. Brotherly love from the rector of Leningrad Theological Academy and Seminary, Cyril, the Archbishop of Vyborg.’<sup>7</sup>

Calling Mary by the name of the ‘Ever-Virgin’ was never a practice in Russian Baptist churches, but the editorial staff of *Bratsky Vestnik* readily included in full the message of the Russian Orthodox Archbishop. Similar trends can be found in the underground periodicals of the CCECB<sup>8</sup>. For instance, an editorial of *Bratsky Listok* [Fraternal Leaflet] mentioned what it called an ‘ancient heresy’ in the early Church, which was that Mary was called ‘not by the name of the *Theotokos* [the one who gives birth to God] but by the name of the *Christotokos* [the one who gives birth to Christ]’.<sup>9</sup> The Baptist editor undoubtedly gave priority here to Orthodox sources.

The Patriarch’s Christmas and Easter greetings to Klimenko, who was President of the AUCECB from 1974 to 1985, are significant for the reiteration of the phrase ‘holy kiss’:

To the president of the AUCECB, A.E. Klimenko, ‘Dear brother in the Lord! We greet you with a holy kiss and compliment you on the high grand feast of Christmas... With unfailing brotherly love, in Christ’s love – Pimen, the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.’<sup>10</sup>

To the president of the AUCECB, A.E. Klimenko, ‘Dear brother in the Lord! ...Greeting you with an Easter kiss, we stand in the unfailing love of the Risen Christ. Pimen, the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.’<sup>11</sup>

<sup>6</sup> *Bratsky Vestnik* did publish greetings from Western Baptists from time to time, but from about the mid-1970s the emphasis was on the representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church.

<sup>7</sup> *BV*, no. 1 (1978), p. 18.

<sup>8</sup> Council of Churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, underground association of Baptist communities in the Soviet Union, opposed to the AUCECB (since the 1960s).

<sup>9</sup> *Bratsky Listok* [Fraternal Leaflet], no. 2 (1991), p. 1.

<sup>10</sup> *BV*, no. 2 (1975), p. 13.

<sup>11</sup> *BV*, no. 3 (1979), p. 40.

This Orthodox language (and practice) was not found among Russian Baptists.<sup>12</sup> The Soviet Baptists normally reserved the ‘holy kiss’ for those within their communities, and the publication of these letters in *Bratsky Vestnik* in the 1970s, and the implied acceptance of the ‘holy kiss’, showed that the ‘brotherhood’ was opening itself up to Orthodoxy in a new way.<sup>13</sup>

In response to the numerous congratulations and greetings from the official representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church, the leaders of the AUCECB also spared no flattering words for a variety of reasons:

The All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians–Baptists sends warmest greetings to the Russian Orthodox Church on the occasion of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the restoration of Patriarchate in Russia... We wish His Holiness Alexius, the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, as well as all the episcopacy and priesthood of the Russian Orthodox Church, great divine blessings in their ministry, that it might be full of grace... [signed] President of the AUCECB, Ya.I. Zhidkov, and Secretary-General, A.V. Karev.<sup>14</sup>

The title given to Patriarch Alexius by Zhidkov and Karev is significant. They did not use the common language employed by ministers of the AUCECB, which was ‘brother in Christ’, nor did they place emphasis on hierarchy by using, for example, an allowable but more modest Orthodox appellation *vladyko* [sovereign]. Rather, they deliberately chose what the Orthodox themselves used as their ecclesiastical title – ‘His Holiness Alexius, the Patriarch of...’ In this period it is possible to observe a growing affirmation by Russian Baptist leaders of the role of the leadership of the Russian Orthodox Church and a growing warmth in the character of their mutual relationships.<sup>15</sup>

In 1971, leaders of the AUCECB addressed the newly elected Patriarch Pimen in more democratic way, as their ‘beloved brother’, but even here one can find in abundance not so much a Protestant as *Byzantine* vocabulary:

To Pimen, the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia: ‘Dear and beloved brother in our Lord Jesus Christ and minister of His Church, ...not wishing to be apart from the historical event in the life of the Russian Orthodox Church – the election of her Primate, the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia – we express our unalloyed joy that this great decision has fallen to Your lot and congratulate You... from the bottom of our heart on the assumption of this high-holy and highly important

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<sup>12</sup> On the Orthodox custom of ‘holy kissing’ see, for instance: Archbishop Veniamin, *Novaya Skrizhal’, ili Ob’yasnenie o Tserkvi i Vsekh Sluzhbakh i Utvaryakh Tserkovnykh* [The New Tablet, or an Explanation of the Church, Liturgy and all Church Services and Utensils] [1908] (M.: Izd-vo Pravoslavnogo Bratstva Sv. Filareta, 1999), p. 120.

<sup>13</sup> In 1964, J. Pollock cited the words of an Orthodox Archbishop that the times of persecution of Russian Baptists by the Orthodox Church had changed into their ‘kiss of peace’. See J. Pollock, *The Faith of the Russian Evangelicals* (N.Y.: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964), p. 99.

<sup>14</sup> *BV*, no. 4 (1958), p. 5.

<sup>15</sup> See also the warmth of the article in memory of Patriarch Alexius published in *BV*, no. 5 (1970), pp. 58–60.

ministry. We are praying to our One Lord and Saviour that He will give You heavenly wisdom and the fullness of physical and spiritual strength for leading the great Russian Orthodox Church... Love in Christ... from the Presidium of the AUCECB.<sup>16</sup>

The Communists would not have forced Russian Baptists to pour so much 'holy oil' (since it was possible just to say some formal polite words), if many of them had not felt in the depths of their heart a kinship with the Orthodox Church. Talking with older ministers of the Russian Baptist brotherhood and turning the pages of Christian periodicals of this period, one can be again convinced of this.

From the life of the local churches: the city of Gorky. ...The grand meeting dedicated to the celebration of the Millennium of the Baptism of Russia took place... A sister recited the poem *Russia*... Hieromonk [a priest and monk] Makary, representing the Orthodox Church, addressed himself to the audience with a word of greeting... The holiday meeting was ended with the choral singing of Derzhavin's ode *God* and with prayers of thanksgiving.<sup>17</sup>

Similar reports came from all over the Soviet Union, too many to be ignored.

## Finding common ground: Slavophile tendencies

The specific character of some of the material written by foreign authors and published in *Bratsky Vestnik* is also significant. The editorial board chiefly selected for publication comments by Western Baptists who, having visited the USSR, praised the Soviet way of life and also spoke of the superiority of the Christian life of Russian Baptists by comparison with Baptists in the English-speaking world. Slavophile tendencies were being reinforced. In 1962, *Bratsky Vestnik* reported on a visit to the Soviet Union by a delegation of African-American Baptist pastors:

In Moscow, the guests visited the Kremlin, Red Square and V.I. Lenin's Mausoleum. They also admired the great success of our country at the Exhibition of Achievements of the National Economy... They were impressed by all that they saw and heard in the Soviet Union: the clean streets, the vast scale of building, free medical service, sincere warm-hearted Christians devoted to God... And they said, 'Yes, truly the light will come from the East!'<sup>18</sup>

The correspondent, representing the AUCECB, put the standard praise of socialism in the American pastors' mouths, but a sense of real conviction is present in his final, Eastern Christian proclamation, 'Yes, truly the light will come from the East!' In the Russian Orthodox tradition, the East (in contrast

<sup>16</sup> 'Patriarkhu Moskovskomu i Vseya Rusi Pimenu' [To Pimen, the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia], *BV*, no. 4 (1971), pp. 14-15.

<sup>17</sup> *BV*, no. 1 (1989), p. 74. The ode is a famous poem by the Russian (Orthodox) poet, Gavrila Derzhavin, in the eighteenth century.

<sup>18</sup> K. Pilipyuk, 'Prebyvanie v Sovetskom Soyuze Gruppy Negrityanskikh Baptistskikh Pastorov iz Ameriki' [Visit to the Soviet Union by Black Baptist Pastors' Group from the USA], *BV*, nos. 5-6 (1962), pp. 32-4.

to the West) was always associated with the Kingdom of God and the Divine Light.<sup>19</sup> And Baptist *Bratsky Vestnik* stood solidly in that Russian tradition.

Similar sentiments were carried in *Bratsky Vestnik* in the 1970s. In 1972 reflections by Andrew MacRae, who was General Secretary of the Baptist Union of Scotland and who was then President of the European Baptist Federation, were featured. The editorial board of *Bratsky Vestnik* published an article by MacRae under the unusual (for Soviet people) title 'Christian Life in the Soviet Union: Freedom of Faith'. Having, no doubt, been briefed by his Russian Baptist hosts, he wrote:

It is said that Russian Baptists are not allowed to have Sunday schools. In fact Sunday schools have never been a part of Russian tradition... The Russians always thought that sharing their faith with a younger generation was a mission of the Christian family. The number of young people admitted to church membership offers reliable evidence of the impact of the Christian family. We can learn from them... In a Communist society, the Baptist witness... has reached its present considerable magnitude in Russia. Over the same period, we Christians of Western Europe... fell into decay.<sup>20</sup>

The well-known idea that the spiritual life of Russian Baptists was somehow deeper, richer, and more perfect than the experience of their Western brethren is only superficially connected with Communist propaganda and, indeed, with Baptists. In fact this idea is many hundreds, if not thousands, of years old. It reflects the eternal confrontation between the East and the West. Some astute foreigners who visited Russia in different historical epochs felt this mystical religious spirit, which was only indirectly related to a Christian denomination. Here, for example, is the opinion of one of the leaders of the Christian Peace Conference, Pastor N. Vikromazing, published in *Bratsky Vestnik* in 1974:

I was moved to the very bottom of my soul by the people's devotion at your church. Their prayers and singing are still ringing in my ears... Such religious piety, as that which I saw in the Soviet Union among both the Baptists and Russian Orthodox people, is uncommon in the world of today.<sup>21</sup>

The author quite rightly noticed here the *general* Eastern Christian spirit, expressed in a special reverence for God in the communities of Russian Baptist and Orthodox parishes. This commonality was not always obvious

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<sup>19</sup> For example, the famous Orthodox theologian A. Schmemmann wrote about this (in connection with the Orthodox understanding of Baptismal symbolism): 'If facing the West... means facing Satan and his darkness, turning to the East signifies the conversion of man to the Paradise which was planted in the East, his conversion to Christ, the light of the world'. (A. Schmemmann, *Of Water and the Spirit: A Liturgical Study of Baptism* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974), p. 30). For comparison, some anti-Western ideas in the tradition of Russian-Ukrainian Baptists: 'They turned not to the Lord but gazed to the West... forgotten that the star heralded the birth of the Saviour, was seen *in the east*.' (Unpublished memoirs by B. Zdorovtsev, famous preacher of CCECB from Kharkov, Ukraine).

<sup>20</sup> A. MacRae, 'Khristianskaya Zhizn' v Sovetskom Soyuze: Religioznaya Svoboda' [Christian Life in the Soviet Union: Freedom of Faith], *BV*, no. 5 (1972), pp. 13-14.

<sup>21</sup> 'Nam Pishut' [Our Letters], *BV*, no. 4 (1974), pp. 79-80.

to the internal observer in the USSR. Later, Dr M. Elliott wrote about it in this way:

Slavic Christianity, in both its Orthodox and Evangelical expressions, strongly emphasizes God's awesomeness, majesty, and holiness... Whereas Western Evangelicals sing 'What a friend we have in Jesus', Slavic Christians more often see their Maker as Master and Judge... Christians of all confessions in the West, more commonly than in the East, stress the understanding of God over the mystery of God... It also strikes me that Eastern Orthodox and Slavic Evangelicals have a more sacramental understanding of faith than is typical for Western Evangelicals.<sup>22</sup>

In the eyes of the majority of the population of the Soviet Union, Orthodoxy seemed a much more traditionally Russian faith by comparison with the Baptist form of Christianity. Indeed it was often denied that the latter had any Russian-ness at all. It is notable that some Russian Orthodox and Communist commentators used the same vocabulary in condemning Soviet Baptists for choosing 'alien' beliefs.<sup>23</sup> On occasions the response within the AUCECB was to agree with this charge.<sup>24</sup> However, the general body of Russian Baptist authors utterly opposed such an approach to the issue of their identity.<sup>25</sup> Some apologists of the Russian Baptists pointed out to the representatives of the Orthodox the Greek origins of their beliefs,<sup>26</sup> and to the Soviet propagandists of the Communist Party the German roots of Marxism.<sup>27</sup> There was, however, a strong tendency among the Orthodox and the Baptists to consider their beliefs to be either native Russian or simply 'the faith given by God'.<sup>28</sup> The *Pochvenniki* [lit. return to the soil] of nineteenth-century Orthodoxy had their followers among Russian Baptists who found only indirect relationships between their community and the West. Some saw their beliefs as 'a mixing of the [Russian] Orthodox and Molokan doctrines', so that they were not considered as bearers of Western teaching.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>22</sup> M. Elliott, 'Eastern Orthodox and Slavic Evangelicals: What Sets Them Both Apart From Western Evangelicals', *East-West Church & Ministry Report*, vol. 3, no. 4 (1995), p. 15.

<sup>23</sup> See a review of the theme: L. Mitrokhin, *Baptizm: Istoriya i Sovremennost'* [The Baptists: The History and the Present] (SPb.: Russky Khristiansky Gumanitarny Institut, 1997), pp. 21-9, 57-8.

<sup>24</sup> See, for instance, A. Karev, 'Russkoe Evangel'sko-Baptistskoe Dvizhenie' [The Russian Evangelical-Baptist Movement], in *Nastol'naya Kniga Presvitera* [The Handbook for Presbyters] (M.: AUCECB, 1982), pp. 155-75.

<sup>25</sup> See, for instance, A. Bychkov, 'Stoletie Ob'edinitel'nykh S'ezdov' [The Centenary of the Unifying Councils], *BV*, no. 6 (1984), pp. 44-7; M. Karetnikova, 'Russkoe Bogoiskatel'stvo' [Russian God-seeking], *Al'manakh po Istorii Russkogo Baptizma*, vol. I (1999), pp. 3-84; S. Savinsky, *Istoriya evangel'skikh khristian-baptistov Ukraini, Rossii, Belorussii* [History of the Evangelical Christians-Baptists of the Ukraine, Russia, and Belorussia] (1867 – 1917) (SPb.: Biblia dlya Vsekh, 1999), pp. 160-8.

<sup>26</sup> For the first time this argument was used by Russian Baptists before the Bolshevik Revolution. See, for instance, G. Mazaev, *Vospominaniya* [Memories] (Korntal: Svet na Vostoke, 1992), pp. 71-2.

<sup>27</sup> See, for instance, A. Vlasov, *Ot Izbytki Serdtsa* [Out of That Fills the Heart] (Idar-Oberstein, Germany: Titel Verlag, 2000), p. 157.

<sup>28</sup> See, for instance, Savinsky, *Istoriya*, pp. 26-53; Mazaev, *Vospominaniya*, p. 71.

<sup>29</sup> See Yu. Kuksenko, 'Nashi Besedy' [Our Conversations] (typescript), Kazakhstan's Baptist Union Archives (2002), pp. 144-5.

In parallel with the discussions about spiritual identity which took place in publications, ideas about the self-sufficiency of the Russian Baptists and the independence from the West of their way of life were common among many ministers within Russian Baptist congregations in the Soviet period.<sup>30</sup> The following story told by the former senior presbyter of the Kazakhstan Union of Baptist churches, V.V. Gorelov, illustrates this theme well and reproduces his context and the spirit of his time. In the mid-1970s, a group of Baptists from Austria came to Alma-Ata, Kazakhstan. There was a warm meeting with local Baptist pastors and the visitors took part in a church service in the Central Baptist Church in Alma-Ata. However, shortly after their departure, the leading ministers of the church were required to meet with a regional Soviet Religious Affairs officer who started to lecture them for allowing foreigners to preach at the church. V.V. Gorelov replied to the charge with words that indicated his ability in diplomacy:

You know that all frontier posts, customs, the whole Soviet Army are in your power. So, please, do not let any foreigners into this country at all! We will get by somehow without them. But if you let foreigners into the country, we should entertain them freely, so that later they do not speak badly of us... We have received the visitors as our brothers in faith... If we were wrong, please, do not let foreigners in at all!<sup>31</sup>

The use by Gorelov of a Slavophile motif that was traditional for Russia ('we will get by somehow without foreigners') disarmed the Religious Affairs officer. Nor was this an isolated incident. When the Communists portrayed Soviet Baptists as German or American spies,<sup>32</sup> as they often did, the genuine Russian-ness of the Soviet Baptists was the strongest counter-evidence. This was particularly evident during the 1960s and 1970s when it was often alleged that Baptists were political suspects, related to the West, and especially to America. The response of one ordinary Baptist believer, who responded to this accusation at his works meeting, became well known among Russian Baptist congregations. He stated: 'You know me. I am a Baptist. Now, then, I tell you that I have never laid eyes on an American in my life!'<sup>33</sup> This elicited smiles and laughter and produced a positive attitude on the part of the officials. At local level it was recognised that Russian Baptists were 'our people'. Baptists did not become 'ours' through agreement with Communist ideas; as a rule none were Komsomol or Party

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<sup>30</sup> However, it is also true that a considerable part of them have emigrated to the economically prosperous Western countries, especially the USA, and live there now. A good many Russian Orthodox people have also emigrated to the West.

<sup>31</sup> Testimony of former senior presbyter, V.V. Gorelov (INT, Los Angeles, California, USA, 2006).

<sup>32</sup> See, for instance, Mitrokhin, *Baptizm: Istoriya i Sovremennost'*, pp. 57-8.

<sup>33</sup> Testimony of Baptist presbyter from Maikop, N.G. Man'ko (INT, Everett, Washington, USA, 2006).

members. But they were seen to share in general anti-Western feelings.<sup>34</sup> It is notable in this connection that those among the CCECB who appealed to Western public opinion for help did not enjoy the support of the majority of their brotherhood.<sup>35</sup> When deported from the Soviet Union, Georgi Vins began his famous press campaign in the USA in defence of persecuted Baptists in the USSR and in 1982 was even received by the President of the USA, Ronald Reagan. The leader of the CCECB, G.K. Kryuchkov, gave Vins a lecture, and in particular forbade him 'going to presidents'.<sup>36</sup>

In line with their somewhat emotional anti-Western feelings, Soviet Baptists often preferred to welcome Orthodox people and sometimes even Communists rather than Western evangelicals. A.T. Kharchenko, who was for many years a member of the Sukhumi community of CCECB and took an active part in 'underground' printing of evangelical literature, later said, 'The Communist morality, in spite of its godlessness, was in a way higher than the Western, individualistic style of living, with its insensitivity to the life of the neighbour.'<sup>37</sup> This kind of statement is not atypical, although other Baptists would not have gone so far. What they did have, however, was a feeling for *sobornost* [communalism] of the Russian Baptists. Because of their encouragement of the collective spirit, Communists (despite being oppressors of religion) were sometimes more native to the Baptist brotherhood and sisterhood, which was traditionally lived out in community. Russian Baptists certainly hoped for the religious liberty that was found in the West, yet at the same time the way this was expressed in the West was somewhat alien, owing to its individualistic basis.<sup>38</sup> A.V. Karev, the General Secretary of the AUCECB, who was torn between sympathy for the West and the East, nonetheless made his deepest feelings evident in 1957 in *Bratsky Vestnik*:

...The inner, spiritual resources [of our brotherhood]... should arouse the utmost praise and gratitude to God within the whole of Christendom, as the Russian Evangelical movement is a bearer of Apostolic Christianity. But we cannot say as much for Christian churches of the West, unfortunately. The most grievous fact in contemporary Western Christianity, including among Baptists, is their lack of the spirit of Apostolic Christianity, ... of their first love to Christ... testimony ...

<sup>34</sup> The exceptions to the rule were perhaps ethnic German Soviet Baptists, who usually sympathised with their historical motherland, and a minor part of the CCECB which occasionally appealed to public opinion in the West in order to draw attention to the religious persecutions in the USSR.

<sup>35</sup> See, for instance, Kuksenko, *Nashi Besedy*, pp. 71-2, 140.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 68-72.

<sup>37</sup> Testimony of A.T. Kharchenko (INT, Sacramento, California, USA, 2006).

<sup>38</sup> The kernel of the problem is elucidated well by the Orthodox theologian N.M. Zernov, 'The West, starting from the individual, sees the community as the outcome of a collective desire to live and act together. For the East the community comes first and the individual is seen as a part of the whole.' (N.M. Zernov, *Eastern Christendom* (N.Y.: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1961), p. 229). And A.S. Khomyakov wrote, 'When anyone falls, he falls alone; but no one is saved alone'. (A. Khomyakov, *Tserkov' Odná* [The Church is One] (M.: Dar'', 2005), p. 37).

the priesthood of all believers, and... simplicity. Therefore, anyone who would like to find the country in the world where there is a Church... with all the attributes of Apostolic Christianity should be pointed to the Soviet Union... We can say without any pride and conceit that the Evangelical-Baptist Church in the USSR is the Apostolic Church of the twentieth century.<sup>39</sup>

This passage, though written by a Baptist, is a piece of Slavophilism of the purest hue, exhibiting the spirit of Russian messianism. Even Russian Orthodox Slavophile authors would not all have ventured to assert so openly that the church in Russia was a 'bearer of Apostolic Christianity' but that 'we cannot say as much for Christian churches of the West, unfortunately', and to declare that the church in the USSR 'is the Apostolic Church of the twentieth century'.

Although such ideas, expressed in the official periodical of the AUCECB, might well arouse the suspicion that they were said for the benefit of (or under instructions from) the Soviet censors, there is evidence that Karev was neither acting against his conscience nor simply carrying out Communist commands. Karev's personal diary for 1959-62, published in 1999, reflects his clear perception of the anti-Christian nature of Soviet power, and yet at the same time conveys his belief in Russia's special historical role. Russia was passing through the crucible of sufferings, like the Apostolic Church, and was keeping the true faith, not only for herself but also for other countries and nations, including the Western world, where, from the point of view of Karev, authentic Christianity had been lost. He wrote:

We are the successors of those who were burnt to death in Nero's gardens and torn to pieces by lions in circus arenas!.. [That is] the 'messianism of Russia'!

The Christian West is Christianity without Christ ([quoting] F.M. Martsinkovsky).

The sacred mission of the Russian evangelical movement is to uphold Apostolic Christianity!<sup>40</sup>

## Baptists, Orthodox, and confrontation with the West

Taking into account the root causes of the existence of such views in the Russian Baptist brotherhood, it is not surprising that there were numerous publications in *Bratsky Vestnik*, which were directed primarily against the wrong course of the leading Western countries and, at the same time, in

<sup>39</sup> A. Karev, 'Russkoe Evangel'sko-Baptistskoe Dvizhenie' [The Russian Evangelical-Baptist Movement], *BV*, no. 4 (1957), pp. 37-8. Such ideas were found much earlier, in I.S. Prokanov's time. See, for instance, *Utrennyaya Zvezda* [The Morning Star], nos. 6-8 (1922), pp. 6-14.

<sup>40</sup> For these and other similar thoughts see 'Dnevnik A.V. Kareva' [A.V. Karev's Diary], *BV*, no. 1 (1999), pp. 44-51; nos. 2-3 (1999), pp. 53-7.

support of the ‘most fair’ Soviet (Russian) foreign policy. And these kinds of materials had a sublimely religious fervour; it would be more precise to refer not so much to the Communist propaganda (elements of which, of course, took place), but to the centuries-old Orthodox way of thinking, whereby the mythologised world evil is concentrated in the West, and the truth of God is in the East. For comparison, here are some typical quotations from *Zhurnal Moskovskoy Patriarkhii* [Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate] and *Bratsky Vestnik*:

The household of the Church, as well as our entire nation, cordially approve the consistent, truly peace-loving policy of the Soviet Union. The situation in Europe... has become quieter mainly simply through the efforts of our country.<sup>41</sup>

We are grateful to God that, in spite of the escalation of the international situation by the aggressive forces of the West, the government of our country takes a line over peace... Many international conferences... are grateful to our country for the way of peace.<sup>42</sup>

The polemic here against the ‘aggressive’ course of the countries of the West, and at the same time the support of the ‘way of peace’ that was being set out and implemented in Russian foreign policy, certainly owed something to Communist propaganda and to the need for Baptists to be seen to be loyal to the state; but there is also an indebtedness in such statements to the traditional Russian Orthodox world-view, in which wrong thinking is found in the West, whilst God’s truth is known in the East. The leaders of the Russian Orthodox Church and the AUCECB went so far as to associate their own histories with that of the Soviet State:

The sixtieth anniversary of the Soviet State is in some way also a jubilee of the Russian Orthodox Church... May the humane, just and peace-loving national and foreign policy of the Soviet State be triumphant!<sup>43</sup>

...Our warmest congratulations on the sixtieth anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution. This year, the Evangelical Christians-Baptists observe their 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary [in Russia]; and the greater part of the brotherhood history falls in the period when our country, for the first time in the history of mankind, chose the road of building the Socialist society.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Patriarch Pimen, ‘Rech’ na Zasedanii Sovetskogo Komiteta Zashchity Mira’ [Soviet Peace Committee Meeting Speech], *Zhurnal Moskovskoy Patriarkhii* [Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate; below – *ZhMP*], no. 11 (1977), pp. 36-7.

<sup>42</sup> A. Bychkov, ‘Doklad Plenumu VSECB’ [Report to the Plenum of the AUCECB], *BV*, no. 5 (1981), p. 53.

<sup>43</sup> N. Zabolotsky, ‘K Shestidesyatiletiiu Sotsialisticheskoy Otchizny’ [In Commemoration of the Sixtieth Anniversary of the Socialist Homeland], *ZhMP*, no. 11 (1977), pp. 38-41.

<sup>44</sup> ‘Predsedatelyu Prezidiuma Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR Leonidu Il’ichu Brezhnev’ [To the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev], *BV*, no. 6 (1977), p. 8.

It is interesting to note how closely some Orthodox Christians and Baptists linked their church history to the anniversary of the Soviet state. And if sixty years of socialism in Russia (in 1977) could be at a stretch to correlate with the 110-year anniversary of the emergence of the Russian Baptist brotherhood, the 1000 year history of the Russian Orthodox Church in this historical period does not fit at all. However, from another point of view, such an approach had a right to exist. If behind the puzzling emphasis on the words ‘Soviet state’ in the context one can see what many Russian Christians (both the Orthodox and Baptists) actually saw, it would surely be: the *Russian* state. A parallel might be the way in which the majority of White Guard emigrants, for all their anti-communism, fervently desired the victory of the USSR over Nazi Germany, as General A.I. Denikin put it: ‘We felt a pain during the days of defeat of the Army, even though it is called the ‘Red’ [Army] and not the ‘Russian’, and – joy during the days of its victories...’<sup>45</sup>

*Zhurnal Moskovskoy Patriarkhii* and *Bratsky Vestnik*, as spiritual editions, were not confined to the usual pro-Soviet (political) rhetoric of their time. They went further:

The Russian Orthodox Church is showing concern over the alarming news about the Western European rearmament programme... In spite of the healthy and long-awaited process of ‘East – West’ policies of détente... the antagonism between good and evil continues.<sup>46</sup>

In these days, when the cry arises in the West in support of the arms race, the words of Christ come back to our memory, ‘All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword’.<sup>47</sup>

The ancient Russian Orthodox paradigm is evident: the confrontation of the East and the West is neither more nor less than the ‘antagonism between good and evil’. It is interesting to compare this statement with the politico-religious thesis by the President of the United States, Ronald Reagan, about the Soviet Union as the ‘evil empire’ (1983).<sup>48</sup>

Even the Soviet military campaign in Afghanistan did not make any difference to Russian Orthodox and Baptist rhetoric about the ‘peace-loving’ Soviet state. During the first half of the 1980s, assurances that the AUCECB ‘prayerfully supported’ the ‘wise policy’ of the USSR continued as before.<sup>49</sup> In December 1979, when the political decision to send Soviet troops to

<sup>45</sup> “*Obrashchenie Generala A. Denikina k Dobrovol'tsam*” [The Appeal of General A. Denikin to the Volunteers] [1944], *Rodina*, nos. 6-7 (1991), p. 105.

<sup>46</sup> Patriarch Pimen, ‘Rech’ na Sobranii Aktiva Sovetskikh Obshchestvennykh Organizatsy’ [Soviet Public Organizations Activists’ Meeting Speech], *ZhMP*, no. 10 (1979), pp. 41-2.

<sup>47</sup> ‘From the Life of the Local Churches’ (editorial article), *BV*, no. 2 (1983), p. 76.

<sup>48</sup> See Ronald Reagan, ‘The ‘Evil Empire’ Speech’, in *The Public Diplomacy Reader*, ed. by J.M. Waller (Washington, DC: Institute of World Politics Press, 2007), pp. 137-43.

<sup>49</sup> See, for instance: *BV*, no. 4 (1981), p. 58; no. 2 (1983), pp. 76, 78; no. 1 (1985), p. 37.

Afghanistan had already been made, those present at the 42<sup>nd</sup> Convention of AUCECB in Moscow wrote in a telegram to L.I. Brezhnev, 'We unanimously entertain your peace-loving proposals, directed at peace and disarmament, and are asking for this in our prayers to Almighty God.'<sup>50</sup>

In this period, *Bratsky Vestnik*, strongly distancing itself from the West, at the same time willingly showed the historical closeness of Russian Baptists and Orthodoxy. This was expressed, for example, in the publication of favourable articles on the history of Russian Orthodox Church, as well as many poems and musical recordings of hymns of known Orthodox authors. In 1971 Alexei Bychkov, who became General Secretary of the AUCECB in that year, wrote an article in *Bratsky Vestnik* on the recent 'Local Council of the Russian Orthodox Church'. In his article, Bychkov wrote particularly about the Local Council's lifting of the anathemas that had been pronounced on the schismatic Old Believers in Russia in the seventeenth century. Bychkov noted that the Council's decision did away with the 'formidable obstacles' to unity within Russian Orthodoxy.<sup>51</sup> The Soviet Baptists had not been able to achieve reconciliation following the serious split of the 1960s and there had been 'anathemas' pronounced within Baptist ranks. In the light of this, the AUCECB was seeking any help that might be available from the example of the Orthodox Church's experience in healing the scars of schisms. In the issue of *Bratsky Vestnik* containing the report of the Local Council there was also the following significant statement:

Our Holy Russian Orthodox Church, like other local Orthodox Churches, holds as her basis the creed of the One Church of the seven Ecumenical Councils and is not only the keeper but also the dispenser of great spiritual treasures.<sup>52</sup>

## Russian Baptist appreciation of Orthodox literature

Another example of Russian Baptist recognition of the riches of the Orthodox tradition is the way, from the beginning of the 1980s, that *Bratsky Vestnik* published Russian 'classical religious' – that is Russian Orthodox – poetry. In the period leading up to the celebration of one thousand years of Christianity in Russia, it is apparent that fewer poems by Baptist authors were being published in *Bratsky Vestnik*, while the number of Russian Orthodox poets whose work was included was increasing considerably. It must not be forgotten that *Bratsky Vestnik* was designed to be a periodical for the members of the Russian Baptist community, not to be a literary

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<sup>50</sup> 'Telegramma Predsedatelyu Prezidiuma Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR' [Telegram to the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR], *BV*, nos. 1-2 (1980), pp. 52-3. Though the AUCECB probably did not know at that point about the active preparation for the military campaign, their telegram was published in *Bratsky Vestnik* in 1980 when everyone was talking about the war in Afghanistan.

<sup>51</sup> See *BV*, no. 4 (1971), pp. 11-12.

<sup>52</sup> *BV*, no. 4 (1971), p. 13.

magazine. The number of literary pieces featured was, therefore, all the more remarkable.

The following are examples of much-acclaimed pieces of classical Russian Orthodox poetry that were published by *Bratsky Vestnik* in the period from 1980 to 1988: G.R. Derzhavin's *Bog* [God];<sup>53</sup> I.S. Nikitin's *Molenie o Chashe* [Praying for the Cup];<sup>54</sup> K.M. Fofanov's *Otrechenie Petra* [Peter's Denial];<sup>55</sup> A.M. Zhemchuzhnikov's *Pritcha o Seyatele i Semenakh* [The Parable of the Sower and the Seed];<sup>56</sup> D.S. Merezhkovsky's *O, Bozhe Moy* [Oh, My God];<sup>57</sup> V.S. Soloviev's *Emmanuel* [Immanuel]<sup>58</sup> and *Prizvanie Avraama v Zemlyu Obetovannuyu* [The Call of Abraham to the Promised Land];<sup>59</sup> I.I. Kozlov's *Moya Molitva* [My Prayer];<sup>60</sup> and S.Ya. Nadson's *Khristianka* [A Christian Woman].<sup>61</sup> In this period *Bratsky Vestnik* also published some printed music by famous Orthodox composers, for example: A.A. Kopylov,<sup>62</sup> A.A. Arkhangel'sky,<sup>63</sup> and G.F. Lvovsky.<sup>64</sup>

Russian Orthodox authors were also increasingly commended or featured in *Bratsky Vestnik* in the 1980s. Thus in 1988 (the year of the celebration of the 1000<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Baptism of Russia) the General Secretary of the AUCECB, A.M. Bychkov, wrote an appreciation in *Bratsky Vestnik* of A.P. Lopukhin,<sup>65</sup> the pre-revolutionary Russian Orthodox theologian and publisher, and V.S. Soloviev, the famous Russian philosopher.<sup>66</sup> Bychkov said that in his view 'Lopukhin was a [Russian] Orthodox theologian but his works are characterized by the purity of the Gospel, toleration and a desire to enlighten the masses'.<sup>67</sup> A theological (Christological) article by A.P. Lopukhin was published in 1990 in *Bratsky Vestnik*.<sup>68</sup>

The years 1989 and 1990 saw *Bratsky Vestnik* reprinting (probably from old Russian Orthodox miscellanies) a remarkable number of works by famous Russian Orthodox authors, including the following: F.M.

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<sup>53</sup> See *BV*, no. 3 (1980), pp. 54-6.

<sup>54</sup> See *BV*, no. 4 (1980), pp. 63-6.

<sup>55</sup> See *BV*, no. 5 (1985), pp. 66-7.

<sup>56</sup> See *BV*, no. 3 (1987), p. 66.

<sup>57</sup> See *BV*, no. 5 (1987), p. 52.

<sup>58</sup> See *BV*, no. 6 (1987), p. 51.

<sup>59</sup> See *BV*, no. 6 (1988), p. 46.

<sup>60</sup> See *BV*, no. 2 (1988), p. 64.

<sup>61</sup> See *BV*, no. 5 (1988), pp. 62-3.

<sup>62</sup> See *BV*, no. 3 (1986), p. 37.

<sup>63</sup> See *BV*, no. 3 (1987), pp. 64-5; no. 2 (1989), pp. 54-5.

<sup>64</sup> See *BV*, no. 5 (1987), pp. 48-51.

<sup>65</sup> See *BV*, no. 2 (1988), pp. 60-2.

<sup>66</sup> See *BV*, no. 1 (1990), pp. 52-4.

<sup>67</sup> See *BV*, no. 2 (1988), p. 62.

<sup>68</sup> See A. Lopukhin, 'Yavleniya Voskresshego Khrista' [The Appearances of the Risen Christ], *BV*, no. 1 (1990), pp. 5-9.

Pestryakov's *Vera* [The Faith];<sup>69</sup> I.S. Nikitin's *Novy Zavet* [The New Testament];<sup>70</sup> S.Ya. Nadson's *Drug Moy, Brat Moy!* [My Friend, My Brother!];<sup>71</sup> V.A. Zhukovsky's *Savl na Doroge v Damask* [Saul on the Way to Damascus];<sup>72</sup> F.M. Dostoevsky's *Rozhdestvo Khristovo* [Christmas];<sup>73</sup> A.I. Sulotsky's *Golgofa* [Calvary];<sup>74</sup> S.F. Ryskin's *Pogrebenie Khrista* [The Burial of Christ];<sup>75</sup> A.N. Maykov's *Khristos Voskres!* [Christ is Risen!];<sup>76</sup> A.K. Tolstoy's *Greshnitsa* [A Sinful Woman];<sup>77</sup> L.N. Afanasiev's *Te Zvezdy v Nebe ne Pogasli* [Those Stars in the Sky have not Become Dim];<sup>78</sup> I.I. Kozlov's *O Drug, Pover'!* [Oh, Friend, Believe!];<sup>79</sup> K.K. Romanov's *Ne Govori, Chto k Nebesam* [Do not Say that the Heavens];<sup>80</sup> A.N. Pleshcheev's *On Shel Bezropotno* [He Humbly Walked];<sup>81</sup> and A.S. Khomyakov's *Voskreshenie Lazarya* [The Raising of Lazarus].<sup>82</sup>

Close reading of the lists above illustrates that the works chosen deal with central Christian beliefs held by Orthodox and Baptist writers alike. It should be noted, however, that the authors chosen were not only the kind of classical Russian Orthodox poets and writers that might have been expected. The great F.M. Dostoevsky, for instance, was known for the scornful language he used when writing about the forerunners of the Russian Baptists – the Stundists and Radstockists.<sup>83</sup> Grand Duke K.K. Romanov was a member of the Russian Imperial House, the ruling family, on behalf of which in Russia before 1905 many sectarians were severely persecuted.<sup>84</sup> The ideologist of Slavophilism A. S. Khomyakov believed that Protestantism can never exist on Russian soil.<sup>85</sup>

Given this openness to Orthodoxy by Russian Baptists in the 1980s, it is little wonder that Russian Orthodox leaders were ready to reciprocate.

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<sup>69</sup> See *BV*, no. 2 (1989), p. 56.

<sup>70</sup> See *BV*, no. 2 (1989), p. 65.

<sup>71</sup> See *BV*, no. 3 (1989), p. 69.

<sup>72</sup> See *BV*, no. 4 (1989), p. 51.

<sup>73</sup> See *BV*, no. 6 (1990), pp. 68-70.

<sup>74</sup> See *BV*, no. 1 (1991), p. 56.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> See *BV*, no. 2 (1991), pp. 57-8.

<sup>78</sup> See *BV*, no. 6 (1991), p. 74.

<sup>79</sup> See *BV*, no. 2 (1992), p. 43.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> See *BV*, no. 3 (1992), pp. 50-1.

<sup>82</sup> See *BV*, no. 4 (1992), p. 70.

<sup>83</sup> See, for instance, F. Dostoevsky, 'Mirages: Stundism and Radstockists', in F. Dostoevsky, *A Writer's Diary*, Vol. 2, 1877-1881, trans. by K. Lantz (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1994), pp. 816-20.

<sup>84</sup> See, for instance: *Velikiy Knyaz' Konstantin Konstantinovich Romanov* [Grand Duke Konstantin Konstantinovich Romanov], ed. by S. Mironenko et al. (SPb.: ART-Palas, 2000).

<sup>85</sup> See, for instance: A. Khomyakov, *Sochineniya Bogoslovskie* [Theological Works] (SPb.: Nauka, 1995). One of the most popular Russian Baptist hymns – *The land is trembling* – is written by A.S. Khomyakov.

There were enthusiastic Orthodox readers of *Bratsky Vestnik*, such as a head of a monastery, who wrote:

Thank you very much for the periodical... It has rich contents and it meets the manifold demands of believers... God help you in such a difficult ministry! With thanks, Hegumen Eleazar.<sup>86</sup>

The same issue of *Bratsky Vestnik*, in 1980, contained this letter:

When I received some issues of the periodical, I was pleasantly surprised to know how many people loving the Lord live in all parts of our country... I wish you much success, welfare, and divine help in your highly demanding work. Archpriest Konstantin.<sup>87</sup>

In the 1970s and 1980s there were joint divine services in various Russian Baptist churches involving the participation of Russian Orthodox priests and also Baptist presbyters taking part in services at Orthodox churches. *Bratsky Vestnik* repeatedly informed readers about this. Not denying that these events were partly stimulated by Soviet power, one should pay attention to the fact that the joint services with the participation of representatives of the Baptist communities and the Russian Orthodox Church did not cease in the period of religious freedom in the country, starting from the second half of 1980s. Therefore it would be wrong to blame only the Communists for the 'Christian ecumenism' in the Soviet Union.

[At Leningrad Baptist Church], after congregational singing... Metropolitan Nikodim said, 'Beloved brothers and sisters! Your brother in Christ, a Russian Orthodox bishop, is now before you... I feel as a Christian among Christians here'.<sup>88</sup>

On Russian Orthodox Bishop Anthony's invitation, [Baptist] senior presbyter V.N. Vlasenko... took part in the grand divine service... at Stavropol Cathedral of St. Andrew. Brother V.N. Vlasenko spoke there...<sup>89</sup>

Archpriest Viktor took part in a service at Kustanay Baptist Church and stated, 'We have a great opportunity to be together: as Baptists, as Orthodox people... We want our churches to be in accord in the future... for we have one Lord, one baptism, one native country, one land.'<sup>90</sup>

## Conclusion

Although the brotherly words contained in these reports in *Bratsky Vestnik* somehow attributed more to the Orthodox clergymen (Baptist elders behaved

<sup>86</sup> 'Bratskomy Vestniku – 35 Let' [The 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Bratsky Vestnik], *BV*, no. 5 (1980), p. 62.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> *BV*, no. 2 (1976), p. 20. See a description of another divine service with a Russian Orthodox bishop at Leningrad Baptist Church: 'From the Life of the Local Churches', *BV*, no. 5 (1988), pp. 88-90.

<sup>89</sup> 'From the Life of the Local Churches', *BV*, no. 5 (1985), pp. 79-80.

<sup>90</sup> 'From the Life of the Local Churches', *BV*, no. 5 (1988), p. 82.

in a more restrained manner), yet these materials were published by the Baptist periodical. Therefore the responsibility for the rapprochement between the Russian Orthodox Church and Russian Baptists, undoubtedly, lies on both sides.

Such was the fundamental direction in the development of the two largest Russian Christian movements. This state of affairs lasted for decades – until the time of the ‘Western captivity’ of the Russian Baptist Union in the early 1990s. That, incidentally, happened not only with the Baptists; a significant part of the whole Soviet society experienced a certain period of admiration for the West at that period.

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# Contentment: Radical Discipleship for Young Adults

Fran Blomberg

## Introduction

Melanie was flustered and teary.<sup>1</sup> We were attending our church women's retreat and she simply could not decide between the varied activities available during our free afternoon. Even as we later enjoyed the natural hot springs with beautiful Rocky Mountain scenery, she expressed regret that she wasn't shopping, or napping, or hiking. This discontent with decisions and relentless review of options is one effect on persons living in consumer cultures.

At Scum of the Earth Church<sup>2</sup> in Denver, Colorado,<sup>3</sup> I have worked primarily with millennials, those young adults born between 1980 and 2000. I have worked with some of them since they were in their early twenties and have tracked their maturation now into their mid-thirties. The primary developmental tasks for young adults are to secure self-identity and determine major life commitments.<sup>4</sup> As they appropriately lessen ties to traditional authorities in their quest for ownership of personal responsibility and values, they are particularly susceptible to cultural influences such as the pervasive influence of market and media. Young adults are learning to learn how to function as mature, responsible contributors to society.

I have observed that rather than resulting in excited determination, the number of choices available for activities, relationships, education, and vocation have an overwhelming — at times almost paralysing — effect on young adults' ability to discern a preferable option and pursue it with gratitude and satisfaction. I have also noted with concern that young adults in our congregation seemed unwittingly to reduce themselves, and others, to beings valued not on the basis of the intrinsic *imago Dei*, but on appearance, profitability, or utility.

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<sup>1</sup> Names of congregants have been changed.

<sup>2</sup> Hereafter in this article, referred to simply as Scum.

<sup>3</sup> For information on the church, see Mike Sares, *Pure Scum: The Left-out, the Right-brained and the Grace of God* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2010), or <<http://www.scumoftheearth.net>>

<sup>4</sup> For young adult psycho-social and religious development, I refer the reader to Jeffrey Jensen Arnett and Jennifer Lynn Tanner, eds., *Emerging Adults in America: Coming of Age in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 2006); Christian Smith and Patricia Snell, *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Life of Emerging Adults* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); and Sharon Daloz Parks, *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams: Mentoring Young Adults in Their Search for Meaning, Purpose, and Faith*, rev. ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011).

In my doctoral research, I suggested that five practices in particular could be developed in the context of the church to help young adults recognise and resist the pull of a consumer mentality on themselves and their relationships.<sup>5</sup> In this article, I concentrate on one of these practices: contentment. I will first review what is meant by practices and virtues. I will parse aspects of contentment and show its relationship to other practices. My concern here is how contentment is attained, or practised, in a consumer culture which promotes dis-content through constantly shifting desires, and sees commitment as stifling self-expression. The discussion will be peppered with examples from my church of how we have endeavoured to inculcate the practice of contentment among young adults.

## Practices and Virtues

Christian practices are actions and attitudes that witness to and invite participation in the present reality of God's kingdom.<sup>6</sup> They are complex, socially embedded, intentional, and habitual. Practices build on historical precedent while being dynamic and adaptive. They have social, moral, and 'epistemological weight'; their exercise may lead to new knowledge, or new understanding of God.<sup>7</sup> Their excellence is not achieved quickly, but requires ongoing deliberation of their meaning and continual social embodiment. Practices are far richer than casual activities.

In a work directed specifically to young adults, Dorothy Bass and Susan Briehl refer to practices as 'the way of life abundant':

To embrace a way of life abundant requires us to be *attentive*. No one can live this way in isolation from others; life abundant depends upon and arises within life *together*. It does not lead into a fantasy future or purely spiritual realm but *into the real world*. There, Christians practice these practices not for our own sake but *for the good of all*, and not by our own power or vision but *in response to God*, whose grace and call provide this way of life.<sup>8</sup>

A Christian practice is a significant and meaningful activity performed by the community. Its value is found in the process itself as it supports and deepens relationships between the individual in the community and God. The

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<sup>5</sup> Frances Blomberg, *Forming and Sustaining Christian Community in a Consumer Culture* (unpublished doctoral thesis, International Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015). The five practices are: contentment, stability, hospitality, commitment, and communal discernment.

<sup>6</sup> My description of practices combines aspects of the definitions given by Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), p. 187; Craig Dykstra, 'Reconceiving Practice', in *Shifting Boundaries: Contextual Approaches to the Structure of Theological Education*, ed. by Barbara G. Wheeler and Edward Farley (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1991), pp. 35-66; and Dorothy C. Bass, 'What Is a Practice?' (March 2004), <<http://www.practicingourfaith.org/what-christian-practice>> [accessed 20 January 2017]

<sup>7</sup> Dykstra, 'Reconceiving Practice', p. 45.

<sup>8</sup> Dorothy C. Bass and Susan R. Briehl, *On Our Way: Christian Practices for Living a Whole Life* (Nashville: Upper Room Books, 2010), p. 12. Bold italics in original.

internal benefits of the practice also generate a desire to extend the practice to include others as part of a living and growing tradition.

A virtuous character is carefully and repeatedly fostered through the community's practices; the practices, in turn, done with intention and meaning, lead to the development of a virtuous, or morally excellent, character. N.T. Wright notes the predilection in contemporary western societies and churches to live for experience, what 'feels good', or feels 'authentic'. Rather, the Christian should recognise that life has a goal or purpose, a *telos*, which is writ by God and involves the transformation of the believer's character into a Christ-like one. This transformation is not 'natural'; it involves the habits of the second nature, or new self, given through the Holy Spirit. It leads however, to what is genuinely authentic, as a person realises human flourishing in a deepening relationship with God and God's people.<sup>9</sup>

## Practising Contentment

Contentment is the state of being at peace with, or despite, one's circumstances; it involves other qualities such as patience, gratitude, hope, and kindness.<sup>10</sup> It is not, as will be discussed, apathy toward circumstances, or deceived bliss about reality.

## Rooted in the *Imago Dei*

Contentment is rooted in the theological task of understanding identity and relationships as ascribed in the *imago Dei*. It is the result of security based on the reality of salvation achieved by Christ, which will be culminated at his second coming. God's image in humans includes metaphysical, intellectual, moral, emotional, volitional, and relational dimensions; for this article, the relational dimension will be most important.<sup>11</sup>

At a time when identity formation and selection of life commitments are at their most intense, we consistently remind congregants to see themselves as bearing the image of God as their primary identity. Believers

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<sup>9</sup> On the development of Christian character, see N.T. Wright, *After You Believe: Why Christian Character Matters* (New York: HarperOne, 2010) and Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981).

<sup>10</sup> Steve L. Porter, 'Contentment', in *Being Good: Christian Virtues for Everyday Life*, ed. by Michael W. Austin and R. Douglas Geivett (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), pp. 126-144 (pp. 127, 133).

<sup>11</sup> For an overview of the main understandings of *imago Dei*, see Gordon R. Lewis and Bruce A. Demarest, *Integrative Theology*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), pp. 142-60. See also Craig L. Blomberg, "'True Righteousness and Holiness': The Image of God in the New Testament", in *The Image of God in an Image-Driven Age: Explorations in Theological Anthropology*, ed. by Beth Felker Jones and Jeffrey W. Barbeau (Downers Grove: IVP, 2016), pp. 66-87.

defined as children of God find this identity to be the source of self-worth, the guide to moral behaviour, and the principal influence on relationships. As much as God is unchanging, there can be constancy in the *imago Dei* within a person.

Consumerism, on the other hand, would credit the essence of who one is to 'what one has', while at the same time marketing a continually varied array of attitudes, actions, and products which grant status and distinction.<sup>12</sup> Eager for new experiences, young adults can be deceived by the pretence of unlimited freedom of choice and autonomy. In their quest to solidify identity and values, they willingly put on and discard habits and traits as they rise and decline in popularity. This pressure to create and re-create identity is lessened by reminders of their 'reconstituted identity' based on the love of the Father, the likeness of the Son and the enabling of the Spirit.<sup>13</sup>

At Scum, we carefully nuance what is meant by a 'personal relationship with Jesus', lest the community aspect of the body of Christ be lost. Hymns that emphasise the individual are routinely adjusted from 'me' to 'we'. We teach that salvation is *from* sin and isolation, *to* holiness and community. Conversion expresses a new ontological reality of being a child of God. In baptism, we are committing to the family of God, and no one walks alone. While the community cannot be dictatorial, community interests and submission within the community to the shared understanding of Scripture and God's will allow boundaries that reinforce and keep identity secure. Teresa is one who has embraced dramatically and fully a changed identity. From addressing herself as a 'drug-crazed, loser-freak', even after years of sobriety, she now leads worship and stands with arms held high as she proclaims, 'I'm no longer a slave to fear; I am a child of God'!<sup>14</sup>

A major struggle is persuading congregants that they cannot slice and dice Christianity, select only certain agreeable parts of scripture, or give pre-eminence to 'what the text means to me':

It's not enough that I encounter and make sense of my life in terms of the Christian story. The story of Jesus, of God's redemptive activity in and for the world, must become the story I find myself in. My story must be located within the greater story of the Christian narrative.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984).

<sup>13</sup> Anthony C. Thiselton, *Interpreting God and the Postmodern Self: On Meaning, Manipulation and Promise* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), p. 161.

<sup>14</sup> Jonathan David and Melissa Hesler, 'No Longer Slaves,' on the album *We Will Not Be Shaken* (Redding, CA: Bethel Music, 2015).

<sup>15</sup> Jason Clark, 'Consumer Liturgies and Their Corrosive Effects on Christian Identity', *Church in the Present Tense: A Candid Look at What's Emerging*, ed. by Scot McKnight, Peter Rollins, Kevin Corcoran, and Jason Clark (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2011), pp. 52-53. In a similar vein, Tex Sample, *The Spectacle of Worship in a Wired World* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), p. 106, says, 'The task is not, then,

This re-orientation of putting myself in God's story rather than asking 'where does God fit in my life?' needs ongoing reinforcement in sermons and conversations. Tyler Wigg-Stevenson urges young adults not to consider themselves 'historically exceptional'; great peace and contentment can come from seeing the continuity of God's redemptive plan and their part in this meta-drama.<sup>16</sup>

Twenty-somethings often need to be re-oriented to seeing the goal of their adulthood not as self-sufficiency, but as the conviction of the sufficiency of God and the value of pursuing his purposes. In a decade of flux and change, leaving home, pursuing education and a career, finding meaningful relationships, it is easy to become impatient, and to compare one's 'success' with that of others. Rather than lament if desirable circumstances are not forthcoming (for example, marriage is not on the horizon or a career path ricochets rather than rockets off), stability, peace and encouragement come from recognition that who one is in Christ is sure and unrelated to performance.

### Self-contentment and Self-care

With understanding of the *imago Dei* comes capacity and interest in self-care, another important part of contentment that helps the young adult resist self-commodifying to be accepted by others.<sup>17</sup> Scum seems to be a magnet for many who have had traumatic childhood experiences and/or have made disastrous life decisions at a young age. Coping mechanisms such as dissociation or outbursts of anger might be understandable in a vulnerable child, but need to be discarded as an adult. Telling the story of the pain diminishes its power, demonstrates there is an alternative to secrecy, adjusts understanding, and gives meaning. Peace and contentment come not by repressing the pain, but by recalibrating responses to the tragic events and acquiring appropriate adult coping skills.

Bold preaching can acknowledge the struggle to repent and heal, while at the same time announcing a new norm that counters the commodification of the body typical of a consumer culture. Using raw and intense metaphors can describe the anxiety of identity production in a competitive society. Irony without pessimism speaks well to the millennial generation. Preaching can offer assurance that it is in deepening relationships, not a constant search for

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how we can get God into the picture. It is rather how we understand our picture in terms of God's greater picture.'

<sup>16</sup> Tyler Wigg-Stevenson, *Brand Jesus: Christianity in a Consumerist Age* (New York: Seabury Books, 2007), p. 217.

<sup>17</sup> Evelyn L. Parker, 'Honoring the Body', in Bass and Briehl, *On Our Way*, pp. 133-147; see also David P. Setran and Chris A. Kiesling, *Spiritual Formation in Emerging Adulthood: A Practical Theology for College and Young Adult Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), pp. 161-183.

new ones, that one can find satisfaction. Story Night replaces a sermon several times a year at Scum. While coached to ensure that the lurid details of their former life do not detract from the beautiful redemption of their current lives, selected congregants who are experiencing significant transformation tell their stories with raw emotion and full disclosure. Recovery groups also allow a safe venue for honest confession and support in healing.

### **Support of Mentors**

The practice of contentment is also supported by mentors who reflect back one's self-awareness, and remind the emerging adult that it is not necessary to project one's self through the currently acceptable commodity. We are disposed to practise what is unfamiliar when we can emulate others who obviously derive satisfaction from the practice; at Scum, we contend that if you are 'one step ahead' of a friend, you can be a helpful peer mentor. More experienced practitioners also help create the environment that offers opportunities for the practice and can help navigate obstacles that occur.

Mentors need not lead perfectly exemplary lives, but demonstrate to the emerging adult a capacity for contented self-acceptance in the midst of their own growth. In a frenetic consumer culture with seemingly limitless options, mentors can help by affirming choices as reasonable and adequate rather than holding out for 'the perfect solution'. Mentors can point out the unnoticed work of the Holy Spirit as they review a congregant's success in past situations and applaud the decision-making process being used in the current dilemma. Mentors can offer understanding, drawing on beliefs, desires, and feelings that are already present.

In an hours-long meeting one day, Jacob talked about retaliating in fistfights with his abusive father, regret over early relationships with women, an aborted baby, and other misadventures in his life. There was seemingly nothing to admire in his behaviour in these situations. But I could honestly commend his recognition of these events as regrettable, commend his desire to find healing from them, and commit to continued mentoring on how to change habits of the mind that had grown as a result of poor decisions in his teen years. At this point he did not call his behaviour sin, but was receptive to hearing about the Holy Spirit as the apparent conscience that had led him to bring up these topics and put them on the table for what we would later discuss in terms of sin, redemption, and transformation.

Jacob's initial combination of unwillingness and inability to see his own sin in his actions and responses supports Christian Smith and Patricia Snell's contention that most emerging adults 'explicitly denied feeling any regrets about any of their past decisions, behaviors or problems'. They

believe this inability to admit regret gives a sense of release from the responsibility to think through actions and consequences (theirs or others'), keeps life upbeat and moving forward, stifles negative emotions, and protects a fragile self-identity and self-worth.<sup>18</sup>

## Gratitude

Gratitude is a practical counter to the consumer desire, which is 'not really about attachment to things, but about the joys of desiring itself. It is the joy of endless seeking and pursuit.'<sup>19</sup> Gratitude itself is a gift of God, not dependent on one's achievements, and is needed before one can willingly accept gifts from another. The practice of gratitude allows appreciation of ordinary, uneventful days, without the expectation that every experience will be stimulating and life-altering. In striving toward the developmental goals of self-discovery and realising potential, the traits of complaining, entitlement, and selfishness can arise; gratitude serves as a foil to these less than desirable habits.<sup>20</sup>

Gratitude flows from a letting go, well-captured by the German word *Gelassenheit*, a yieldedness of one's personal desires for the betterment of the community. Gratitude and *Gelassenheit* both support contentment in trusting that one's genuine needs will be met by the practice of putting the other first. When Donald complained vehemently about the lack of vegan options in the free meal after the worship service, our conversation led him to see that this oversight was opportunity for teaching more than a right to be demanded. He ruminated, 'I almost killed myself with alcohol, and now I have an apartment and a church that serves me dinner.... Yeah, I'll speak with the folks who make dinner'.

## Simplicity and Limiting Options

Intentionally practising contentment includes the willingness to limit options and enjoy simplicity. It creates a culture in which individuals can realise we are better suited to sufficiency than saturation,<sup>21</sup> and that accumulating more and more, faster and faster, is the opposite of our deeper longing for coherence, simplicity, satisfaction, and calm. 'The dilemma posed by

<sup>18</sup> Smith and Snell, *Souls in Transition*, p. 41.

<sup>19</sup> Vincent Miller, *Consuming Religion: Christian Faith and Practice in a Consumer Culture* (New York: Continuum, 2003), p. 7. Similarly, 'while virtues are to be practiced for their intrinsic good and satisfaction; that is how we often "practice" desire'. Miroslav Volf, *A Public Faith: How Followers of Christ Should Serve the Common Good* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2011), p. 69.

<sup>20</sup> Christine D. Pohl, *Living into Community: Cultivating Practices that Sustain Us* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), p. 21.

<sup>21</sup> Paul L. Escamilla, *Longing for Enough in a Culture of More* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2007), p. 4.

consumerism', Skye Jethani contends, 'is not the endless manufacturing of desires, but the temptation to settle for desires far below what we were created for.'<sup>22</sup> The practice of contentment can transform desires, giving value to that which is centred on God and the kingdom rather than temporal, changing fads. Desire is a constitutive human characteristic, primarily to enthuse us in our search for God as well as to motivate us toward godly relationships with all that has been created. Contentment is then found not in the sense of satiation, but of confidence that the unchanging, revealing God is the appropriate object of our desire, and that the thirst we feel for God is eschatologically fulfilled.<sup>23</sup>

A contented church does not strive for a 'hipper-than-thou' attitude in a constantly changing, competitive culture.<sup>24</sup> Rather, a contented congregation is satisfied with facilities that are adequate but not showy, and offers opportunities for involvement without being over-programmed.<sup>25</sup> Though originally built as a church, before our purchase, Scum's building had most recently been an art studio. The paint-splattered floors, varied and unusual colour schemes, and hand-tiled bathrooms make for an eclectic aesthetic experience, but nothing is expensive, and nothing needs to be protected from ordinary use. The plates are mismatched, the weekly meals are simple and repetitive, and the furniture all second-hand and worn. This intentional lack of elegance allows poorer members to feel at ease. Focus goes to the relationships built around mismatched mugs of coffee, and gratitude is expressed.

A contented church tries not to demonstrate an anxious or self-focused perspective toward money. Scum encourages congregants to give generously, realising that for some, it might mean dropping a bus token in the offering bucket to be passed on to someone in need. We retain our transient young adults for an average of three years before they move for a job, education, or family, so it is important to inculcate values that will travel well with them to different locations. That is one reason we strive to demonstrate trust in God by encouraging those who want to give toward individuals and organisations outside of Scum, even when our own finances seem in jeopardy.

Having a lean budget encourages simplicity in programming, which in turn has the benefit of making us rely heavily on the Christian community around us. Families utilise opportunities for children and youth at other

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<sup>22</sup> Skye Jethani, 'Stranded in Neverland', *Leadership Journal* 30:2 (Spring 2009), <<http://www.christianitytoday.com/le/2009/spring/strandedinneverland.html>> [accessed 15 February 2014]

<sup>23</sup> Miller, *Consuming Religion*, p. 112.

<sup>24</sup> Carl Raschke, *Globochrist: The Great Commission Takes a Postmodern Turn* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), p. 51.

<sup>25</sup> Stuart Murray, *Church Planting: Laying Foundations* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1998), p. 190.

churches, and we enjoy learning through seminars open to the wider Christian community. We endeavour to focus on what we do ‘best’ and to appreciate and humbly co-operate with the wider church in Denver. In-house, clothing exchanges are particularly popular among the women. Rather than buying new each season, women gather around heaps of used clothes and compliment each other on how a garment they previously wore looks on its new owner. The practice of contentment means no shame in wearing another’s castoff; and the fun of acquiring something ‘new’ does not have to be purchased at a retail shop.

### **Contentment and Vocation**

For young adults with limited financial means, vocational or university education may be out of reach. Those who do graduate are often saddled with debt and find it difficult to make a salary sufficient for basic needs.<sup>26</sup> In this scenario, common in Denver, Scum considers it a responsibility to encourage the impatient job seeker and help them reframe their expectations and sense of success.<sup>27</sup> Solidifying identity with contentment would suggest that the church has a significant role to play in guiding emerging adults in discovering there is more to vocation than getting a job or making money.

Steven Garber’s exposition on vocation calls for gaining a sense of responsibility for history, a willingness to invest in learning, to participate in social structures for justice, and to act as one is able without discouragement even when one cannot act comprehensively. He speaks of ‘making peace with the proximate’, choosing to live hopefully within limits, and choosing to be engaged with the world even as we realise its injustice.<sup>28</sup>

Significance, contribution, and purpose are found in vocation. Scum is well-positioned to help emerging adults, through mentoring and discussion groups, to consider the ethics around choosing a vocation, paying for training, borrowing and marketing, and navigating as a believer within one’s chosen field. The practice of contentment would help sustain vocation

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<sup>26</sup> ‘Trends in Student Aid’, *Trends in Student Aid 2016*, College Board (2016), p. 3. <[https://trends.collegeboard.org/sites/default/files/2016-trends-student-aid\\_0.pdf](https://trends.collegeboard.org/sites/default/files/2016-trends-student-aid_0.pdf)> [accessed 20 January 2017] states that in 2015, 38% of all borrowers with outstanding student loan debt owed less than \$10,000 and 16%, including 10% of undergraduate borrowers and 43% of graduate borrowers, owed \$40,000 or more.

<sup>27</sup> Emilie Rusch, ‘Forty Per Cent of Working Colorado Renters Spend More than a Third of Income on Housing’, *The Denver Post*, Business Section (2 May 2016), <<http://www.denverpost.com/2016/05/02/40-percent-of-working-colorado-renters-spend-more-than-a-third-of-income-on-housing/>> [accessed 20 January 2017]

<sup>28</sup> Steven Garber, *Visions of Vocation: Common Grace for the Common Good* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2014), p. 203. See also Setran and Kiesling, *Spiritual Formation*, p. 118, who also emphasise the need for a sense of responsibility for others in vocation.

especially if the material rewards of work are not to the degree that the culture would say is ‘enough’.

### **Content with Imperfect Others**

Contentment with one’s own identity positions the emerging adult to consider the worth of others beyond their utilitarian value. Sang Uk Lee describes a benefit of self-contentment as ‘the wisdom of life that induces people to maintain an abundant and generous spirit in spite of human agony’.<sup>29</sup> Being an inner-city church, Scum attracts a number of mentally and physically challenged individuals who cannot compete with the American cultural value of ‘worth through productivity’. We struggle to be patient with rambling prayers, interruptions, and repetitive antisocial behaviour. Contentment comes not from the ability to live apart from the inconveniences of those with exceptional needs, but from the capacity for healthy relationships that neither extols ‘the cult of normalcy’ nor excludes others.<sup>30</sup>

Connection and purpose, Newbigin explains, is enhanced with the understanding that ‘the image of God in the human person is bound up with this mutual inter-relatedness and interdependence... There is no being human except in relatedness, and the true relation between human beings is expressed in the phrase: “Be servants of one another”’.<sup>31</sup> The contented person does not need to fix the other to avoid suffering dis-ease by their limitations. Their afflictions are matters for prayer, not for determining their value to the community. The community is enhanced by the presence of those who remind those of us with good health to humbly serve the disabled, as Christ did for us.

Idealism is strong in young adults, and coming to grips with the imperfections of the community can be difficult. In a culture of instant gratification, unrealistic expectation may be put on the church to be the perfect community, meeting people’s felt needs without infringing on their freedom. Jean Vanier cautions:

It is difficult to get people to understand that the ideal doesn’t exist, that the personal equilibrium and the harmony they dream of come only after years and years of struggle, and even then only as flashes of grace and peace. If we are always looking for our own equilibrium — I’d even say if we are looking too much

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<sup>29</sup> Sang Uk Lee, ‘The Possibility of Hope: Introspective and Aesthetical Analyses’, *Pastoral Psychology* 64:5 (October 2015), 711-725 (p. 720).

<sup>30</sup> Thomas Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2008), p. 46.

<sup>31</sup> Newbigin, *The Other Side of 1984: Questions for the Churches* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1984), p. 56.

for our own peace — we will never find it, because peace is the fruit of love and service to others.<sup>32</sup>

Community takes time to build, but it is difficult to persuade a millennial that time is needed to realise its benefits. In a culture where one can instantly find information, entertainment, and a sense of relationship online, building a face-to-face relationship can seem tedious. I have heard, “I tried that Bible study for a couple weeks, but I didn’t fit in”, or most excessively, “I dated fifty women through E-harmony last year, but not one of them was worth a second date”. Catherine Nerney and Hal Taussig counter well: ‘The emergence of community depends on an extended process. It is the product less of romantic longing than intense and prolonged passion, decision, and commitment.’<sup>33</sup> Leaders and mentors frequently point out that it is in deepening relationships, not a constant search for new ones, that one can find satisfaction.

To that end, Wednesday night is Community Night at Scum. The building is open, a group may use a small room to gather for study or prayer, but the larger rooms are reserved for ‘hanging out’. Without agenda, but with great intentionality on the part of committed members, a safe environment is created for those who would not consider attending a worship service or formal church activity. Conversations are started, needs discovered, false understandings unmasked. Discussions can become intense, or can remain on a safe level with the most nervous.

The church maintains two Facebook pages — the Scum Community page offers information and events; the Scum Baggage Claim is specifically for posting needs with which the community might be able to help. The posts may be as simple as “Help me move a desk” to “I am being evicted tomorrow and need a place to stay till the next paycheck.” All requests, if politely made, are allowed (even if it is unlikely they can be met), and no judgment is made by the administrators of the person’s worthiness to receive help.

In an age of tweets and tolerance, young adults need to see examples of disciplined dialogue between those who disagree on significant social issues. Occasionally, in the guise of ‘just expressing myself’, a person will instigate arguments, make deriding comments and accusations, cause hurt, and shut down conversations in the process. Not long after the presidential elections, as a fellow my age and I cleaned up after a Sunday evening dinner at Scum, he casually asked for whom I had voted. It turns out we had voted

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<sup>32</sup> Jean Vanier, *Becoming Human* (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1998), p. 46. Bonhoeffer's well-known admonition comes to mind also: ‘He who loves his dream of a community more than the Christian community itself becomes a destroyer of the latter, even though his personal intentions may be ever so honest and earnest and sacrificial’. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (London: SCM Press, 1954), pp. 15-16.

<sup>33</sup> Catherine T. Nerney and Hal Taussig, *Re-Imagining Life Together in America: A New Gospel of Community* (Lanham, MD: Sheed & Ward, 2002), p. 230.

for different candidates. I was aware that activity around us halted and people waited to hear how this conversation would ‘go down’. It was an excellent, unscheduled opportunity to model ‘convicted civility’ for an audience often unsure how to handle criticism, and wary of being labelled ‘judgmental’.<sup>34</sup>

## The Discipline of Choosing

A stable identity and practised contentment resists the claim that one must assiduously avoid closing doors on options and consistently acquire more and newer things. One task of practising contentment is to become genuinely free by acquiring the virtue of choosing and committing, because ‘freedom is not having all options open, but of being so formed that many options are not real alternatives’.<sup>35</sup>

In an age of increasing relativism, exploration of options can continue without resolution (recall Melanie, who couldn’t settle on a Saturday afternoon activity), whereas the developmental goal of young adulthood is eventual ability to choose significant beliefs and commitments. Sharon Parks describes the process of maturation for twenty-somethings as journey and finding home, differentiation, and belonging. This process moves from unexamined trust in the teen years, through disillusionment and relativism, to the realisation that some options are apparently better than others. This is the stage of ‘probing commitment’ in which options are weighed, vigorously debated, and held tentatively and inconsistently.<sup>36</sup> This stage ‘allows one a standpoint from which conflicting expectations can be adjudicated and one’s own inner authorization can be strengthened’.<sup>37</sup> It can be a difficult time for a mentor or pastor; seemingly endless challenges to authority and inconsistent behaviour wear on more mature adults who have gone through the angst and arrived at settled convictions. Still, emerging adults in the exploratory stage of probing commitment are to be commended for their desire to search, take risks, and discover. The process of decision-making is to be intentionally and heartily engaged; not rushed, but guided, lest it become an endless search for a non-existent ideal.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> The term ‘convicted civility’ was coined and used throughout his book by Richard Mouw, *Uncommon Decency: Christian Civility in an Uncivil World*, rev. edn (Downers Grove: IVP, 2010).

<sup>35</sup> Arne Rasmusson, *The Church as Polis: From Political Theology to Theological Politics as Exemplified by Jürgen Moltmann and Stanley Hauerwas* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), p. 284. He alludes to Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), pp. 35-49.

<sup>36</sup> Sharon Daloz Parks, *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams: Mentoring Young Adults in Their Search for Meaning, Purpose, and Faith*, rev. edn (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011), pp. 88-93.

<sup>37</sup> James W. Fowler, *Faithful Change: The Personal and Public Challenges of Postmodern Life* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996) p. 63.

<sup>38</sup> James E. Marcia, ‘Development and Validation of Ego Identity Status’, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 3 (1966) 551-558, offers a matrix of potential outcomes involving strong and weak commitment and crisis in young adults’ psycho-social development.

While learning to differentiate from family and social structures of youth, the emerging adult is to be urged not only to sense but to articulate with reason what and why beliefs and commitments are held. As Christian Smith et al. noted, the moral relativism that seems to be increasing among young adults stems in part from a passive acquiescence to cultural forces (such as consumerism) without a proactive commitment toward developing inner strength, values, and virtues.<sup>39</sup> Churches which as a community do not encourage or engage exploration and debate are regrettably unlikely to tolerate or aid those who are seeking to own truth for themselves through the process of probing commitment.<sup>40</sup>

Study, trial and error and support lead to what Parks calls 'convictional commitment', with the ability to engage those with differing views and lifestyles, and to embrace paradox.<sup>41</sup> In an increasingly globalised and pluralised world, this strength of conviction becomes necessary long before the mid-adult years are reached. Contentment comes with convictional commitment, but this point cannot be reached with integrity if the period of exploration is foreclosed.

Assistance from the community of faith in resolving that choosing is *good* may be the first conviction needed before a young adult can effectively settle on other convictions that continue to be life-shaping.<sup>42</sup> Before acting in ways that demonstrate contentment with their choices and options, young adults must hold the conviction that choosing as a spiritual discipline announces the sufficiency of God to meet needs and supply purposeful meaning. Mentors in the Christian community are valuable in helping solidify convictions rather than continually dabbling in options. They can affirm capable agency over passive reception of market and media dictates, and steer their mentees away from capriciously changing toward aligning desire with God.

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<sup>39</sup> Christian Smith, Kari Marie Christoffersen, Hilary Davidson, and Patricia Snell Herzog, *Lost in Transition: The Dark Side of Emerging Adulthood* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 20.

<sup>40</sup> James W. Fowler, 'Religious Congregations: Varieties of Presence in Stages of Faith', in *Christian Perspectives on Faith Development*, ed. by Jeff Astley and Leslie Francis (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), pp. 370-83.

<sup>41</sup> Parks, *Big Questions*, p. 80.

<sup>42</sup> On the necessity of integrating action and conviction, see Parush Parushev, 'Convictions and the Shape of Moral Reasoning', *Ethical Thinking at the Crossroads of European Reasoning*, ed. by Parush R. Parushev, Ovidiu Creangă, and Brian Brock (Praha: International Baptist Theological Seminary, 2007), pp. 27-46; and Parush Parushev, 'Convictional Perspectivism: A Constructive Proposal for a Theological Response to Postmodern Conditions', in *Mission in Context: Explorations Inspired by J. Andrew Kirk*, ed. by John Corrie and Cathy Ross (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2012), pp. 111-124.

## Content and Ambitious

Like any practice, disciplined contentment is not a question of generating a large amount of self-will. It is centred in the reality of Christ's finished work on the cross and the indwelling power of the Spirit, but is not automatically matured in the believer. Wright is adamant that 'the power of right habits' needs to be cultivated; although the promise is sure, it requires time and experience to transform character. Spontaneous attempts to gain the benefits of any virtue, without taking the time to build the virtue through practice, will produce disappointingly minimal and short-lived results.<sup>43</sup> An analogy I have found useful in describing the effort needed for transformation to occur is that 'learning the language of God's new world', as Wright calls it, takes as much effort and intentionality as learning any language would.<sup>44</sup>

Old habits and ways of thinking need to change, and change requires intentional choice. Discipleship is quite simply extended training in being dispossessed. To become followers of Jesus means that we must, like him, be dispossessed of all that we think gives us power over our own lives and the lives of others. Unless we learn to relinquish our presumption that we can ensure the significance of our lives, we are not capable of the peace of God's kingdom.<sup>45</sup>

Young adults need guidance in navigating the subtle difference between ambition toward godliness and character transformation, and ambition toward self-serving ends. Like desire, ambition is hard-wired in us particularly to enthuse our search for God and motivate us toward right relations with others:

The ambition God invites us to is a cross-shaped ambition: to embrace our inability to "have it all" so that he may be our all. Likewise, the contentment to which God invites us is a cross-shaped contentment: to choose to say "thy will be done," to accept our constraints, because it is often through human weakness that God most clearly displays his power and glory.<sup>46</sup>

Ambition in a consumer culture can degenerate into a constant search for novelty and self-advancement. Consumerism has commuted ambitious avarice from a vice to a virtue, without questioning how, or at whose expense, some get ahead. Contentment, on the other hand, turns from a virtue to a vice — a contented person is likely a slacker who settles for second-rate.

The constant arousal of new desires circumvents any need to learn patience and commitment. A lack of time for reflection prevents thoughtfully planning for significant life change. Feelings of thankfulness, contentment,

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<sup>43</sup> Wright, *After You Believe*, pp. 20, 57.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, p.69.

<sup>45</sup> Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom*, p. 86.

<sup>46</sup> Katelyn Beaty, 'Hold on to Your Ambition', *Christianity Today* 60:6 (July/August 2016), 86-90 (p. 90).

disappointment, trust, and achievement are all jettisoned in favour of instant gratification. In helping members of our congregation imagine what they have not experienced, that is, the benefit of patient, focused transformation by the power of the Spirit, I have found this well-known quotation from C. S. Lewis of help:

Indeed, if we consider the unblushing promises of reward, and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.<sup>47</sup>

Ambition can be redeemed from ‘What’s in this for me?’ to ‘What’s in me for others?’ We need a two-pronged approach in teaching twenty-somethings to balance ambition with contentment. On the one hand, practising contentment will not feel ‘natural’; indeed, like all practices, it must through diligence and the power of the Spirit become second nature. On the other hand, contentment is not gained through repressing questions; these must be allowed, while also offering guidance toward resolution of their doubts. Forums, classes, and sermons can boldly engage ‘the frontier where the struggle for faith is most clearly and urgently drawn’,<sup>48</sup> teaching the adequacy of Scripture for faith and practice amid tensions of unresolved issues.

## Leaving Room for Protest

Simon Oxley advocates that protest is needed by the community; change will not occur without some prophetic discontent. He notes that conformity can be just an easy way out of hard thinking.<sup>49</sup> Gerald Schlabach urges that we heartily develop

the practices and virtues that make it possible to reform, protest, and even dissent out of love for one’s Christian community — even while sustaining a doggedly loyal commitment to ‘hang in there’ with those among whom we disagree.<sup>50</sup>

In recent years, much has been written about ‘information cascades’, in which convictions are formed not by personal study but are based on others’ opinions. While developmentally expected among teenagers, this habit does not reflect the maturity and appropriate self-authorisation

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<sup>47</sup> C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*, rev. edn (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), p. 26.

<sup>48</sup> Wilbert R. Shenk, *Changing Frontiers of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1999), p. 138.

<sup>49</sup> Simon Oxley, ‘Nurturing Conformity or Dissent. What is the Function of Christian Formation?’, *Journal of European Baptist Studies* 14:3 (May 2014), pp. 34-46.

<sup>50</sup> Gerald W. Schlabach, *Unlearning Protestantism: Sustaining Christian Community in an Unstable Age* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2010), p. 32.

desirable in young adults. Today's 'plugged-in' twenty-somethings are often unaware that social media algorithms offer them 'more of the same' and not the actual variety of viewpoints on a given topic.<sup>51</sup> A simple exercise to teach this important point is to have a group google the same topic and observe the differences in the top ten returns suggested to each person.

In discussion groups and studies, leaders must create a safe place for disagreement, invite each person to contribute, and model how to assess opinions, while respecting the person. Young adults are learning to learn, and the process can be encouraged when mentors are intentional in their own dialogue with others.

## Conclusion

There are not many stories that can trump the litany of Paul's hardships described in Acts and his letters to young churches (see especially I Corinthians 4.11-13, from which Scum of the Earth Church derives its name, and II Corinthians 11.23b-33). Yet he states assuredly,

I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. (Philippians 4.12)

When practised deeply, contentment contributes to spiritual maturity of people devoted to the full development of Christ-like character. This community in turn is witness to and evidence of the ability to live alternatively to the influence of the dominant culture.

Particularly during the young adult developmental stage, the practice of contentment can provide orientation for identity formation and direction for selecting commitments. It supports what Brett McCracken calls 'authentic Christian cool', which he characterises as celebrating the simple good without cynicism, centring on Christ rather than consumption or image, willingness to say "no" to sin and 'creating a culture of contrast rather than a culture of relevance'. Its timelessness demonstrates McCracken's conclusion: 'True relevance *lasts*'.<sup>52</sup>

Scum has certainly not found a magical formula for forming Christian character and virtues in our young adult congregants. But the intentional

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<sup>51</sup> Eli Pariser, *The Filter Bubble: How the New Personalized Web Is Changing What We Read and How We Think*, reprint edn (London: Penguin Books, April 2012). In the same vein, we can expect to see much more analysis of the phenomenon and impact of 'fake news' in coming years.

<sup>52</sup> Brett McCracken, *Hipster Christianity: When Church and Cool Collide* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), pp. 213, 234 (italics in original).

practice of certain ‘old-time’ habits such as contentment has yielded fruit in the lives of young adults immersed in a culture of discontent.

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# **The Relationship between Faith and Reason in al-Ghazali's Philosophy of Education: Implications for Arab Christian Theological Education**

Caleb Hutcherson

## **Introduction**

The question of how faith and reason relate to one another runs through the history of religious thought. The answers we give to the question shape how we approach many issues of life and belief, including how we think about and practise teaching and learning.<sup>1</sup> As a theological educator involved in Arab evangelical theological education, understanding the philosophical influences shaping education in Arab contexts is crucial to my task. In the case of the eleventh-century Muslim philosopher and theologian Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, his approach to the relationship between faith and reason profoundly shaped Islam and the Arab world, particularly with regard to education. His 'refutation' of philosophy is widely regarded as having contributed to the subjugation of philosophy to revelation and faith in traditional Islamic thought. As will be explored in the argument, many consider al-Ghazali to have left a larger imprint on Islamic thought than any other Muslim except the prophet Muhammad.

Recent scholarship, however, has challenged simplistic readings of his answer to the question of how to relate philosophy and theology, as well as nuancing the extent of al-Ghazali's originality and influence. Even so, his writings are widely recognised as having been a foundational reference for Islamic thinking about education for nearly seven hundred years. The influence of his legacy, though reduced in the encounter with modernity over the last century, continues to underpin dominant frameworks for education in the Arab world. In order to understand the significance of al-Ghazali for Arab Christian theological education, a better understanding of al-Ghazali's philosophy of education is needed.

In this paper I argue that al-Ghazali's concept of the relationship between faith and reason has implications for Christian theological education in Arab contexts. After locating al-Ghazali in his historical-philosophical

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<sup>1</sup> Conversely, it is also true that concepts and practices of teaching and learning shape philosophy. For my purposes in the present article, however, I will focus on the former orientation.

context, I will identify and critically analyse al-Ghazali's concept of the relationship between faith and reason as understood by current scholarship. I will then trace the expression of his concept in elements of his philosophy of education, which, as will be demonstrated in the argument, many consider to be the most influential framework for traditional Islamic education. Finally, I will offer some preliminary ideas about implications of al-Ghazali's influence for Arab Christian theological education. These implications need further research, as al-Ghazali is not the sole source influencing concepts of education. My aim is simply to draw attention to the need for better understanding of one of the dominant frameworks shaping education in Arab contexts.

### Al-Ghazali in his Historical-Philosophical Context

Abu Hamid Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Ghazali (c. 1058-1111) was born in Tus, close to the modern city of Meshed in northeast Iran. After completing his early education in the *madrassa* system,<sup>2</sup> he went on to study *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), *tafsir* (Qur'anic interpretation), *kalam* (scholastic theology), and Aristotelian logic under the Ash'ari theologian Imam al-Juwaini of the Shafi'i *madhhab*<sup>3</sup> at the Nizamiyah *madrassa* in Nishapur.<sup>4</sup> When he was around thirty-three years old, he was promoted to professor at the famous Nizamiyah *madrassa* of Baghdad, which at that time was the central hub for science and learning in the Islamic east.<sup>5</sup> After a four-year period of teaching and writing, al-Ghazali left his official position and status to seek solitude and the mystical life.<sup>6</sup> Later in life he would end up returning to Baghdad to try to restore the educational system from what he perceived as growing theological confusion. Throughout his thirty-year scholarly life, al-Ghazali published extensively. While he is commonly viewed as a brilliant scholar, though largely inconsistent, some recent work

<sup>2</sup> For further history about the institution and spread of the *madrassa* system in the early Seljuk period, particularly through the efforts of the minister Abu Ali al-Hasan at-Tusi Nizam al-Mulk, see Hussain's history on education in the Muslim world: Amjad M. Hussain, *A Social History of Education in the Muslim World: From the Prophetic Era to Ottoman Times* (London: Ta-Ha Publishers Ltd, 2013).

<sup>3</sup> The Shafi'i *madhhab* is one of four primary interpretive approaches to *shariah* (Islamic law) amongst Sunni Muslims. These four *madhahib* were not independent educational institutions, but existed as 'guilds of law' or 'schools of opinion' within the *madrasas* and mosques. The other three are Hanbali, Hanafi, and Zahiri. See Ibid., location 1208.

<sup>4</sup> Frank Griffel, 'Al-Ghazali', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. by Edward N. Zalta, 2016, p. 1 <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2016/entries/al-ghazali/>> [accessed 13 May 2016]

<sup>5</sup> Nabil Nofal, 'Al-Ghazali's Theory of Education', *Prospects: The Quarterly Review of Comparative Education*, Thinkers on Education (Paris: UNESCO: International Bureau of Education, 1993), 519-42 (p. 520).

<sup>6</sup> Most scholars interpret al-Ghazali's departure as a result of his encounter with Sufi teachings, based on his own testimony from his autobiography *Deliverance from Error (al-Munqidh min al-dalal)*. However, Griffel contends that the testimony of his students (such as al-Arabi) as well as his own journal entries in Persian suggest other more personal reasons for his departure. See Frank Griffel, *Al-Ghazali's Philosophical Theology* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 8-9.

demonstrates a consistent maturation in his thinking.<sup>7</sup> This perceived ambiguity has led to various, sometimes contradictory, interpretations of his positions on the role of philosophy in Islam, the relationship between faith and reason, and the role of mysticism and tradition.<sup>8</sup>

From very early in Islamic history, philosophy was a valued import.<sup>9</sup> As Arab Muslim civilisation rapidly came into contact with new cultures and ways of thinking, the great works of philosophy were collected, transmitted into Arabic, and weighed in Islamic scholarly debate.<sup>10</sup> In Aristotle's emphasis on the essential role of human reason in pursuit of truth, many Muslim scholars found a helpful framework for interpreting difficult texts or moral-ethical dilemmas. Disciplines such as Islamic scholastic theology (*kalam*) and thinkers such as al-Kindi, al-Farabi, al-Razi, and Ibn Sina all exemplify this tendency to hold revelation as insufficient, needing the help of reason and philosophy to explain problematic issues both outside of and within revealed knowledge.<sup>11</sup> The Mu'atazilites emerged as a part of this movement, developing a rational theology which looked to reason 'to assess the claims of revelation'.<sup>12</sup> They considered both theology and philosophy to be doing the same thing; therefore no synthesis of the two was needed, as no conflict between the two existed.<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, popular Muslim opinion found Greek philosophy at odds with Islam.<sup>14</sup> More traditional Sunni theologians, referred to as Ash'arites, emphasised the sufficiency of the Qur'an, limiting the place of reason, rationality, and philosophy in religious thinking.<sup>15</sup> While both Mu'atazilites and Ash'arites would support the study of natural sciences, the former saw it as a domain independent from religion, whereas the latter saw it as valuable only in the support of understanding God's will and power.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Frank and Griffel both argue convincingly for the overall maturation of al-Ghazali's thought, rather than the wide inconsistency that popular impressions attribute to him. See R.M. Frank, *Al-Ghazali and the Ash'arite School* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994); Frank Griffel, 'Taqlid of the Philosophers: Al-Ghazali's Initial Accusation in the Tahāfut', in *Ideas, Images, and Methods of Portrayal: Insights into Classical Arabic Literature and Islam*, ed. by Sebastian Günther, Islamic History and Civilization: Studies and Texts (Leiden: Brill, 2005), p. 58.

<sup>8</sup> Oliver Leaman, 'Al-Ghazali', *Oxford Bibliographies Online* (Oxford, 2010) <<http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/display/id/obo-9780195390155-0028>> [accessed 13 May 2016]

<sup>9</sup> J. Mark Halstead, 'An Islamic Concept of Education', *Comparative Education*, 40.4 (2004), 517-29 (p. 517).

<sup>10</sup> Some helpful texts that discuss the scope and depth of this translation and preservation include Majid Fakhry, *A Short Introduction to Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Mysticism* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1997); Dimitri Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early 'Abbasid Society* (London: Routledge, 1998).

<sup>11</sup> Majid Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), p. 120.

<sup>12</sup> Halstead, 'Islamic Concept', p. 518.

<sup>13</sup> Fakhry, *History*, pp. 43-56.

<sup>14</sup> Fakhry, *A Short Introduction*, p. 63.

<sup>15</sup> Halstead, 'Islamic Concept', p. 518.

<sup>16</sup> This rift provided rich cognitive grounds for the early Arab Christian apologists and theologians to explain and defend Christian belief in the Trinity and in the Incarnation, demonstrating the rationality of these ideas in Arab-Islamic language and thought categories. A number of recent studies have explored this

Several issues complicate the reading of al-Ghazali. First, medieval scholarship had different traditions from the contemporary world about reusing ideas, words, or even whole passages from others.<sup>17</sup> Thus, a number of people have written on the issue of authorship of works attributed to al-Ghazali, recognising that some authors used his notoriety to gain a reading for their own ideas.<sup>18</sup> Conversely, al-Ghazali himself draws from a number of sources of classical (Greek) philosophy and Islamic thought.<sup>19</sup> The point is that not all of the ideas, words, or even passages in al-Ghazali's writings are original to him. However, the body of ideas attributed to him does function as the framework many of his interpreters use to conceptualise education.

Related to the first issue, the seemingly contradictory ideas found in al-Ghazali's works are often another point of contention in scholarship about him. Some interpreters misunderstand al-Ghazali with reference to the place of philosophy in religious thought.<sup>20</sup> They read in him a complete rejection of philosophy. I take the position of the more recent scholarly conclusion that this is a misreading of al-Ghazali's concept of faith and reason.<sup>21</sup> It is helpful to acknowledge the extensive tradition of interpretation about him that, I suspect, contributes to conflicting ideas about him.<sup>22</sup> Many interpreters of al-Ghazali find confirmation of their ideas in his writings through history. In order to avoid this error, taking into account his whole corpus is critical.

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early interaction, including: Mark Beaumont, *Christology in Dialogue with Muslims: A Critical Analysis of Christian Presentations of Christ for Muslims from the Ninth and Twentieth Centuries* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011); Sara Leila Husseini, 'Early Christian Explanations of the Trinity in Arabic in the Context of Muslim Theology' (PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 2011) <<http://etheses.bham.ac.uk/2799/>> [accessed 19 February 2015]; Sandra Toenies Keating, *Defending the 'People of Truth' in the Early Islamic Period: The Christian Apologies of Abu Ra'itah* (Leiden: Brill, 2006); Wageeh Y.F. Mikhail, 'Ammār Al-Baṣrī's Kitāb Al-Burhān: A Topical and Theological Analysis of Arabic Christian Theology in the Ninth Century' (PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 2013) <<http://etheses.bham.ac.uk/4162/>> [accessed 2 March 2015]; Thomas W. Ricks, *Early Arabic Christian Contributions to Trinitarian Theology: The Development of the Doctrine of the Trinity in an Islamic Milieu* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2013).

<sup>17</sup> Griffel offers some helpful discussion on this point in his critical exposition of al-Ghazali's philosophy (*Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, pp. 13-14).

<sup>18</sup> See W. Montgomery Watt, *Muslim Intellectual: A Study of Al-Ghazali* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1963); Abdurrahman Badawi, *Mu'alfat Al-Ghazali (Al-Ghazali's Works)* (Cairo: Al-Majlis al-A'la li-Ri'ayat al-Funun wa-l-Adab, 1961).

<sup>19</sup> Alavi identifies three primary Muslim sources for al-Ghazali: Ibn Sina, Ibn Miskawayh, and *Ikhwan as-safa'*. See Hamid Reza Alavi, 'Al-Ghazālī on Moral Education', *Journal of Moral Education*, 36 (2007), 309-19 (p. 311).

<sup>20</sup> Griffel traces the origin of this account of Islamic philosophy's demise in al-Ghazali to Solomon Munk (1844), showing its repetition in influential western Islamic scholars such as Ignaz Goldziher and William M. Watt. See Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, p. 5. The key passages he notes are Munk, *Dictionnaire des sciences philosophiques*, 2:512; Goldziher, *Die islamische und die jüdische Philosophie des Mittelalters*, 321; and Watt, *Islamic Philosophy and Theology*, 117.

<sup>21</sup> As advanced by Griffel, 'Al-Ghazali'; and Michael E. Marmura, 'Al-Ghazālī', in *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, ed. by Peter Adamson and Richard C. Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 137-54 (pp. 137-138).

<sup>22</sup> Eric Hilgendorf, 'Islamic Education: History and Tendency', *Peabody Journal of Education*, 78.2 (2003), 63-75 (p. 69).

Given the limited scope of this paper, I attempt to do so by drawing from the most recent critical scholarship when referencing al-Ghazali's works.

Al-Ghazali's influence is a point of ongoing exploration in scholarship. Samuel Zwemer noted in his biography of al-Ghazali that al-Ghazali 'left a larger imprint upon the history of Islam than any man *save Muhammad himself*.'<sup>23</sup> Quoting from as-Suyuti, Zwemer continues, 'if there had been a prophet after Muhammad it would have been al-Ghazali.'<sup>24</sup> Without a doubt al-Ghazali's impact was extensive, touching Christian Scholasticism and appearing in Aquinas' arguments. His significance within Islamic traditions fuels the ongoing need to study his influence. While recent scholarship has begun to explore and nuance his influence, his work remained the definitive orthodox framework for education for nearly 700 years.<sup>25</sup> In this paper, I trace the expression of his thinking about the relationship between faith and reason in several of his educational concepts. While I presume the influence of these ideas in contemporary education, I do not analyse the broader question of his influence.

In this section I have laid the background for the discussion to follow concerning al-Ghazali's thought by highlighting his place in his historical-philosophical context. I have drawn attention to several issues related to interpreting his writing and influence. In the next section, I will turn to explore more fully his framework for understanding the relationship between faith and reason.

## **Al-Ghazali's Concept of the Relationship between Faith and Reason**

It was precisely concerning the division between the Mu'atazilites and the Ash'arites that al-Ghazali composed his famous 'refutation' (*radd*) in the book *The Incoherence of the Philosophers (Tahafut al-falasifa)*.<sup>26</sup> Many early Western Islamic scholars read al-Ghazali's *Tahafut* as the end of Arab-

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<sup>23</sup> Samuel M. Zwemer, *A Moslem Seeker after God: Showing Islam at Its Best in the Life and Teaching of Al-Ghazali, Mystic and Theologian of the Eleventh Century* (London: Fleming H. Revell, 1920), p. 21. Emphasis added.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. Admittedly, Zwemer's purpose in writing was to advocate al-Ghazali's writings as an intellectual bridge for Muslims towards Christ. However, virtually no one contests his point about al-Ghazali's place in Islamic thought.

<sup>25</sup> Tibawi states that 'with one notable exception, practically all educational literature down to the beginning of modernisation in the nineteenth century is either inspired by his writings or directly derived from them. Nothing of special value was added to theory; authors were content to reproduce their predecessors often in rather condensed form.' Abdul Latif Tibawi, *Islamic Education: Its Traditions and Modernization into the Arab National Systems* (London: Luzac, 1972), p. 41.

<sup>26</sup> *Tahāfut Al-Falāsifah [The Incoherence of the Philosophers]*, trans. by Michael E. Marmura, 2nd edn (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 2002).

Islamic philosophy.<sup>27</sup> Yet, an end it was not. The tension between reason and faith that al-Ghazali proposed resembles the early church theologian Tertullian's adaptation of philosophy to support theology.<sup>28</sup> Al-Ghazali certainly asserts the priority of revelation over reason in *Tahafut* and in his other works, placing revelation as the most important source of knowledge.<sup>29</sup> He demonstrates the impossibility of reason reaching certainty, independent of spiritual understanding and revealed knowledge.<sup>30</sup> Essentially he argues that even the philosophers who claimed to prove certain knowledge through reason alone were themselves relying on revelation to reach their conclusions.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, revelation held priority over reason.

The way al-Ghazali made this argument is important for understanding him. Rather than invalidating philosophical reasoning, al-Ghazali argued for its submission to revelation. Interestingly, al-Ghazali generally shared the conclusions of the Arab philosophers he critiques in *Tahafut* regarding the sciences and the metaphysical nature of the world.<sup>32</sup> His criticism concerns their use of reason in relation to revelation. They claimed to arrive at their conclusions using only reason, rather than revelation. Al-Ghazali demonstrates that the grounds for their claims still leave doubts in his mind. Thus, their claim to reason's superiority fail. Fundamentally, they still rely on revelation. His point is that everyone has religious knowledge<sup>33</sup> informing their understanding. *Tahafut* is better understood as a criticism of the philosophers' claim to certainty independent of revelation, a certainty that is based on the use of rationality and reason.<sup>34</sup> His commitment was to the primacy of revelation.<sup>35</sup> By maintaining this commitment, he did not exclude a role for reason in religion. Al-Ghazali supported this argument by elevating Islamic tradition in relation to reason, giving an apologetic for the final authority of the community of faith.<sup>36</sup> The only higher authority was direct mystical experience (*dhoq* – lit. 'tasting') of True knowledge.<sup>37</sup> The extraordinary rarity of this mystical experience

<sup>27</sup> Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, p. 4.

<sup>28</sup> An example of this is Tertullian's famous statement, 'What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?...our instruction comes from the porch of Solomon....' in 'De Praescriptione Haereticorum', in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translation of the Writings of the Fathers, Down to AD 325*, ed. by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), pp. 243-67 (p. 246).

<sup>29</sup> Halstead, 'Islamic Concept', p. 518, quoting conservative Muslim scholar Syed Ali Ashraf, *New Horizons in Muslim Education* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1985), pp. 27-32.

<sup>30</sup> Halstead, 'Islamic Concept', p. 518.

<sup>31</sup> Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, p. 98.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> In post-modern code, we might say 'faith assumptions'.

<sup>34</sup> Griffel, *Islam and Rationality* (Leiden: Brill, 2016) p. x; and in *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, p. 98.

<sup>35</sup> Frank A. Stone, 'Muslim Faith and Reason Discussion and Its Implications for Islamic Education', *Muslim World*, 60.4 (1970), 314-20 (p. 317).

<sup>36</sup> Stone, p. 317.

<sup>37</sup> Marmura, 'Al-Ghazālī', p. 137.

meant that the default highest authority to which most would have access was the gathered and accumulated Islamic tradition.

Griffel adopts Abdelhamid Sabra's metaphor of *naturalization* to describe the complex relationship between philosophy and Islamic belief in al-Ghazali's thinking.<sup>38</sup> While integrating aspects of philosophy (such as logic) within Islamic religious thinking, al-Ghazali limits other aspects like Aristotelian ontology.<sup>39</sup> Effectively, this cemented a place for reason in Islamic faith, while at the same time reorienting it to an ancillary position in relation to revelation. Reason, rationality, and philosophy were to be citizens in the kingdom of knowledge, but submissive ones.

Al-Ghazali's concept of knowledge further clarifies his understanding of the relationship between faith and reason. Al-Ghazali presents a fairly complex discussion of knowledge in a variety of works, with the clearest summary of his thinking coming in one of his later works, *The Revival of Religious Sciences (Ihya' 'ulum al-Din)*.<sup>40</sup> In it he treats knowledge extensively: its sources, purpose, obligations, nature, and attributes.<sup>41</sup> Fundamentally al-Ghazali considered knowledge to be not just important, but essential, the most important aspect of all of life as it points to and prepares for the afterlife.<sup>42</sup> True knowledge, he argued, is knowledge of God, His books, prophets and messengers, theological cosmology, and *shariah* as revealed through the Prophet Muhammad.<sup>43</sup> In al-Ghazali's concept of knowledge, faith and reason are not held in opposition as contradictory ways of knowing. Rather, they are complementary, just as technique supports the actions of a practitioner.<sup>44</sup>

Al-Ghazali posited a number of categories of knowledge, nearly always using a dichotomy to contrast two types within each category. For example, regarding the nature of knowledge, he divides between the theoretical (religious sciences) and practical (medicine, agriculture, etc.). Concerning the obligation of knowledge, some knowledge is obligatory for every individual, while other knowledge is obligatory on the community as a whole, not on individuals. His dichotomous approach is sometimes

<sup>38</sup> Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, p. 6.

<sup>39</sup> Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, pp. 111-22.

<sup>40</sup> al-Ghazali, *Ihyā' 'ulūm Al-Dīn [Revival of the Religious Sciences]* (Cairo: Lajnat Nashr al-Thaqāfa al-Islāmiyya, 1937) <<http://www.ghazali.org/site/ihya.htm>>

<sup>41</sup> Latefah Alkanderi, 'Exploring Education in Islam: Al-Ghazali's Model of the Master-Pupil Relationship Applied to Educational Relationships within the Islamic Family' (PhD dissertation, Pennsylvania State University, 2001), p. 94.

<sup>42</sup> In al-Ghazali, *Ihyā'*, bk. I, p. 2; a point often echoed in expositions of al-Ghazali, for example: Ibid., p. iv; Raudlotul Firdaus Fatah Yasin and Mohd Shah Jani, 'Islamic Education: The Philosophy, Aim, and Main Features' (unpublished conference paper presented at the International Conference on Psychology in Health, Educational, Social and Organization Settings, Surabaya, Indonesia, 2013), p. 4 <<http://irep.iium.edu.my/34152/>> [accessed 11 February 2016]

<sup>43</sup> *Ihyā'*, bk. 1, sec. 1.

<sup>44</sup> *Ihyā'*, bk. 3, sec. 1.; discussed by Nofal, p. 7.

explained in popular understanding as a distinction between ‘sacred and profane’, though to do so misses the integral relationship al-Ghazali maintains between his categories. All beneficial knowledge ultimately has its cause and source in True knowledge, direct mystical experience of the All-knowing God.<sup>45</sup> All forms of knowledge in this world are held to this pragmatic standard: *to what extent is learning it useful for the goal of knowing and pleasing God?*<sup>46</sup> Religious sciences are seen as superior because they directly concern knowledge about God and salvation in the world to come; while non-religious sciences are analysed on the basis of the extent to which they either enable or inhibit gaining knowledge that pleases God. His categorisations, in practice, introduce a binary valuation to non-religious knowledge based on its spiritual utility. That which is beneficial is permitted (*halal*), and that which is not beneficial is forbidden (*haram*).

This valuation is quite evident in his categories of non-religious forms of knowledge. Throughout, he assigns a valuation to the sub-categories of non-religious knowledge as either praiseworthy (*mahmud* — subjects like the study of arithmetic, astronomy, agriculture) or blameworthy (*madhmum* — magic, talisman, trickery, juggling), or sometimes permissible (*mubah* — philosophy, poetry, theology).<sup>47</sup> Thus the value of knowledge is pragmatic, based primarily on the extent to which it serves man’s primary purpose in this world, which is to draw near to and please God.<sup>48</sup>

An example of this binary valuation can be seen in al-Ghazali’s framing of the origins of knowledge. He divides between knowledge that is revealed (*naql* — literally meaning ‘transmitted’) and that is produced rationally (*aql* — by human reasoning).<sup>49</sup> Those artefacts of knowledge belonging to the *naql* category are understood to have their origins in God, transmitted through the Prophet’s encounter with mystical knowledge, not produced by human reasoning. Significantly, while the Qur’an was primary, the *Sunna* and *shariah* came to belong to this category of *naql* because they are transmitted by the Prophet.<sup>50</sup> By doing this, faith was extended to the truthfulness of Muhammad and everything faithfully recorded about him.<sup>51</sup> This assertion blurred the line between the Qur’an and *Hadith*, thereby

<sup>45</sup> *Munqidh Min Al-Dalal [Deliverance from Error]*, trans. by Claud Field (London: J. Murray, 1909) <<http://legacy.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/1100ghazali-truth.asp>> [accessed 22 April 2016]

<sup>46</sup> Alkanderi, p. 81.

<sup>47</sup> *Ihyā’*, bk. 1, sec. 2. summarised by Yasin and Jani, p. 5.

<sup>48</sup> Nofal, p. 526; Perry Shaw, ‘Madrasa and Church: A Comparative Study of Muslim and Christian Approaches to Religious Education’, *Theological Review*, 22.2 (2001), 216-44, p. 220.

<sup>49</sup> *Mizan Al-‘Amal [The Criterion of Action]* (Cairo: Maktabat Sabi, 1963), pp. 32-33.; *Ihyā’*, bk 1, sec. 2; as noted by Nofal, pp. 7-8.

<sup>50</sup> This becomes particularly clear in his short book *Faysal al-tafriqa bayn al-Islam wal Zandaqa (The Decisive Criterion for Distinguishing Islam from Masked Infidelity)* where he adopts Ibn Sina’s prophetology, as noted by Griffel (*Al-Ghazālī’s Philosophical Theology*, p. 106).

<sup>51</sup> Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī’s Philosophical Theology*, p. 106.

elevating the texts of tradition as above the criticism of reason in the understanding of many. Islamic tradition took on characteristics of revelation, thus requiring submission rather than being open to rational inquiry through independent judgment (*ijtihad*).<sup>52</sup>

The position that al-Ghazali takes on the relationship between faith and reason is a synthesis of others' views. He emphasises the unification of all forms of knowledge in True knowledge — God's knowledge — as the source and cause of all other knowledge.<sup>53</sup> The Qur'an and *Hadith* are the means by which True knowledge is transmitted to humanity.<sup>54</sup> As human knowledge comes to mirror Qur'anic knowledge, it can be said to be True knowledge.<sup>55</sup> Philosophy and reason are held by al-Ghazali as potentially beneficial tools, depending on whether they are used to support and enable deeper understanding of True knowledge. While al-Ghazali's high view of secular sciences may seem to contradict his assertion of revelation's primacy in relation to reason, his framework maintains the primacy of revelation and its accompanying religious sciences as the more valuable of the two kinds of sciences.<sup>56</sup> Philosophy and theology exist in inseparable relationship whereby *faith seeks understanding* using reason when it is beneficial.

In summary, al-Ghazali's concept of the relationship between faith and reason holds that the two are compatible, as long as the proper prioritisation is given to revelation. His thinking in this regard echoes in other significant thinkers in the Middle Ages.<sup>57</sup> Reason corresponds with and is supported by faith in order to obtain certainty. Conversely, only forms of knowledge that correspond with divine revelation are valuable for faith. This binary valuation of knowledge along with his theology of revelation with reference to the Qur'an and Islamic tradition, however, will have serious implications for his philosophy of education, as we will see in the next section.

## Faith and Reason in al-Ghazali's Philosophy of Education

While al-Ghazali wrote about education extensively, his account is not a systematic philosophy of education. Educational ideas are included, instead, as implications from other topics. Alavi notes that al-Ghazali's educational thinking has not received the same scholarly attention as his philosophy,

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<sup>52</sup> Hilgendorf, p. 69.

<sup>53</sup> Griffel, 'Al-Ghazali', sec. 6.

<sup>54</sup> Mark Halstead, p. 520; Perry Shaw, 'Madrasa and Church: A Comparative Study of Muslim and Christian Approaches to Religious Education', *Theological Review*, 22.2 (2001), 216-44 (p. 203).

<sup>55</sup> Halstead, 'Islamic Concept', p. 520; Nofal, p. 523.

<sup>56</sup> Nofal, p. 526.

<sup>57</sup> For example, Aquinas' concept of theology as the rational elucidation of revelation. For further discussion and examples, see John Caputo, *Philosophy and Theology* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2006), pp. 21-34.

politics, mysticism, and religious views.<sup>58</sup> A full treatment of al-Ghazali's educational thinking involves critical synthesis of his ideas from a wide variety of sources, a task beyond the scope of this article. Here I trace connections between his epistemology and elements of his educational philosophy, again relying on the synthesis of others' critical readings of al-Ghazali. Finally, I will return to consideration of the influence of al-Ghazali's thinking on concepts and practices within Islamic education.

## The Aims and Methods of Education

The purpose of education, according to al-Ghazali, is to instill good morals, which have the potential outcome of salvation and happiness in the life to come.<sup>59</sup> The notion of a divide between secular and religious education would be unthinkable to al-Ghazali. Education is intrinsically moral. In accordance with this purpose, al-Ghazali routinely calls for protecting young children from immoral influences.<sup>60</sup> Any educational endeavour that did not contribute to morality and salvation would fail the criterion of being beneficial knowledge. Education ought to lead to cognition of God and choosing to act in specific ways that please Him.<sup>61</sup> Both in the transmission and acquisition of knowledge, education is understood as an act of worship. In this way, the aims of education, according to al-Ghazali, are thoroughly salvific and eschatological.

In Nakosteen's seminal work on the Islamic contributions to western education, he offers an extended quotation from al-Ghazali that demonstrates the salvific value of education. In this passage, al-Ghazali supports his exhortation to learn by pointing to learning's eschatological significance:

My child, knowledge without action is insanity, but action without knowledge is not action. Know that all knowledge cannot save you from sin and will not make you obedient, and will not free you from the fire of hell, unless you really act according to your knowledge...<sup>62</sup>

The acquisition of knowledge is needed for salvation, with the caveat that it must be knowledge put into action. The practical nature of knowledge underpins al-Ghazali's assertion that right practice ought to be the primary

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<sup>58</sup> Alavi, 'Al-Ghazālī on Moral Education', p. 309.

<sup>59</sup> Nofal, p. 524.

<sup>60</sup> J. Mark Halstead, 'Islamic Values: A Distinctive Framework for Moral Education?', *Journal of Moral Education*, 36.3 (2007), 283-96 (p. 291); Mehdi Nakosteen, *History of Islamic Origins of Western Education A.D. 800-1350, with an Introduction to Medieval Muslim Education* (Boulder, CO: University of Colorado Press, 1964), p. 90.

<sup>61</sup> Hamid Reza Alavi, 'Nearness to God: A Perspective on Islamic Education', *Religious Education*, 103 (2008), 5-21 (p. 7).

<sup>62</sup> Nakosteen, pp. 91-92; quoting from al-Ghazali, *Ayyuha al-Walad [Letter to a Disciple]*, trans. by G. H. Scherer (Beirut: Catholic Press, 1951).

focus of the elementary stages of education.<sup>63</sup> If discipline in right habits of action and thought according to *taqlid* (tradition) were the emphasis in early stages, the result in later stages would be the ability to understand and reason.<sup>64</sup> Thus, the early stages of education required tools like memorisation and habituation, whereas reflective inquiry belonged to more mature stages of learning past the age of 40.<sup>65</sup> The underlying idea is that right practice would lead to right understanding in the use of reason.

Al-Ghazali devotes considerable discussion to the role of various groups in education, particularly concerning moral education of children. Because children's nature is *tabula rasa*, parents play a primary role in imparting knowledge and right morals.<sup>66</sup> Parents create an environment, either good or bad, that influences their children's moral development.<sup>67</sup> Quite often, al-Ghazali warns of the corrupting influence of peers,<sup>68</sup> and parents are advised to only allow their children contact with moral friends. This of course does not negate the significant place of teachers for al-Ghazali. Teachers transfer to students that which they do not have, cultivating in them the appropriation and practice of good morals.<sup>69</sup> Teachers serve as moral exemplars and guides,<sup>70</sup> placing a significant emphasis on teachers' lives being consistent with the moral values they teach.<sup>71</sup> Failing to be a moral exemplar would betray the teacher's vocation as much as failing to instruct in good morals.

## The Anthropology of Education

Summarising al-Ghazali's anthropology is complicated, partly because of the arguments within which his view is embedded, but also because of the nuanced position he took between Mu'atazali and Ash'ari methodology and conclusions. Shihadeh thoroughly demonstrates that al-Ghazali held an anthropology of substance dualism, though framed in classical Ash'ari views on the nature of substance.<sup>72</sup> To grossly simplify a complex and nuanced

<sup>63</sup> *Ihyā'*, bk. 3, 61-62; for further discussion of this point see Nofal, p. 524.

<sup>64</sup> Mohammad Attaran, 'Moral Education, Habituation, and Divine Assistance in View of Ghazali', *Journal of Research on Christian Education*, 24 (2015), 43-51; Nofal, p. 524.

<sup>65</sup> Alavi, 'Al-Ghazālī on Moral Education', p. 315; Hilgendorf, p. 69.

<sup>66</sup> *Ihyā'*, bk. 1, 46.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.; also in Alavi, 'Al-Ghazālī on Moral Education', p. 315.

<sup>68</sup> For example, *Ihyā'*, bk. 3, 52.

<sup>69</sup> Nakosteen, p. 57; Nofal, p. 526.

<sup>70</sup> This is al-Ghazali's authorial framework for *Ayyuha 'L-Walad* [Letter to a Disciple]; on this idea, see Alavi, 'Al-Ghazālī on Moral Education', p. 316.

<sup>71</sup> Alavi, 'Al-Ghazālī on Moral Education', p. 316.

<sup>72</sup> *Ihyā'*, bk. 3, 3. Most recently, both Griffel and Shihadeh argue that al-Ghazali holds to (though obscures) a substance dualism view of man. See Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, p. 285; Ayman Shihadeh, 'Al-Ghazālī and Kalām', in *Islam and Rationality* (Brill, 2016), pp. 113-41.

view, al-Ghazali held that human nature is essentially a rational, material soul and body.

According to al-Ghazali, humans are incomplete and animal-like when born. They have the potential to develop, but need cultivation.<sup>73</sup> In order to grow into being fully human a transition must take place from incompleteness to completeness; a process that takes place through living in and interacting with the world.<sup>74</sup> Knowledge is initially extrinsic, transmitted through education. However, it is not merely propositional. True knowledge is holistic — touching cognitive, affective, behavioural, and spiritual domains. For true learning to have happened, it must have affected behaviour.<sup>75</sup> Therefore, al-Ghazali would stress that in the earliest educational stages, children ought to be taught through memorisation, particularly of the Qur'an, *Hadith*, and *shariah*.<sup>76</sup> Development into full humanity is utterly dependent on education.<sup>77</sup> Knowledge is the fundamental need. Acquiring it distinguishes man from the other animals of creation.<sup>78</sup>

Through habituation into orthopraxy, the rational faculty (*'aql*) could be cultivated, eventually leading to understanding. This *'aql* exists as potential in child, but must be converted into actuality in order for a person to be able to form concepts and make generalisations.<sup>79</sup> The conversion of the *'aql* from potentiality to actuality only happens under two conditions: through bodily growth (maturity into adulthood),<sup>80</sup> and through an external, inciting cause.<sup>81</sup> While God is the ultimate cause of the conversion of the rational faculty, the conversion is incited and mediated through knowledge transmitted by the religious sciences.<sup>82</sup> The mature man could reach the place of using reason (guided by faith) in the process of seeking understanding.

For al-Ghazali, rational contemplation paved the way for mystic spirituality, which was the highest route possible to contemplation of True knowledge and happiness in proximity to God.<sup>83</sup> Al-Ghazali's belief that supreme knowledge exists in the all-knowing God allowed him to reject any final dichotomy between the rational and spiritual.<sup>84</sup> While this aspect of al-Ghazali's mysticism was preserved in the traditional Islamic educational

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<sup>73</sup> Nofal, pp. 524-25.

<sup>74</sup> Halstead, 'Islamic Concept', p. 525; Nofal, p. 524.

<sup>75</sup> *Iḥyā'*, bk. 3, pp. 61-62.

<sup>76</sup> *Iḥyā'*, bk. 1, p. 12; bk. 3, p. 52; bk 4, pp. 256-57.

<sup>77</sup> Alavi, 'Nearness to God', p. 19.

<sup>78</sup> *Iḥyā'*, bk. 3, p. 6.; also in *Mizan al-'amal*; For further elaboration, see Nakosteen, p. 91; M. Umaruddīn, *The Ethical Philosophy of Al-Ghazzālī* (Delhi: Adam Publishers, 1962) p. 97.

<sup>79</sup> *Iḥyā'* bk. 1, p. 71-77; see Umaruddīn, p. 93.

<sup>80</sup> *Iḥyā'*, bk 3, p. 14.

<sup>81</sup> *Iḥyā'*, bk. 1, p. 76-77; see discussion in Umaruddīn, p. 99.

<sup>82</sup> Alavi, 'Al-Ghazālī on Moral Education', p. 312.

<sup>83</sup> *Munqidh*.

<sup>84</sup> Saeeda Shah, *Education, Leadership and Islam: Theories, Discourses and Practices from an Islamic Perspective* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016) [Kindle location 610-615].

orientation and theological thought, many other elements of al-Ghazali's mysticism were neglected or rejected in the transmission of his thinking by tradition.<sup>85</sup> I suspect a significant cause for this neglect can be attributed to the elitist place that al-Ghazali held for this highest level of contemplation. Few could access it, and as a non-essential kind of study, its value diminished in the view of many of his interpreters.

### **The Prioritisation of Topics within Education**

A number of contemporary educationalists draw attention to the prioritisation of topics in Islamic education as an expression of al-Ghazali's binary valuation of forms of knowledge.<sup>86</sup> Essentially, al-Ghazali prioritises learning into the following hierarchy:

1st: Necessary sciences (religious). These are studies which enable the faithful to believe and act according to God's will. Al-Ghazali prioritised gaining thorough knowledge of the Qur'an, *Hadith*, *ijma'a* (scholarly consensus), and *fiqh*.

2nd: Supporting sciences (non-religious). This category includes studies that support understanding of 'necessary' sciences (such as Arabic language and rhetoric), and studies which are generally beneficial to the community (such as agriculture, astronomy, and medicine).

3rd: Unimportant sciences. Topics of study included theology, philosophy, and mysticism. Al-Ghazali considered any essential content from these disciplines to be available in the religious sciences studied under the first category (such as Qur'an, *taqlid*, *shariah*). These non-necessary sciences were neither essential for acquiring knowledge of God nor beneficial for people's welfare. Therefore, as a domain of study they held the lowest priority of learning.<sup>87</sup>

This prioritisation reflects the binary categorisation of forms of knowledge in al-Ghazali's epistemology. Underpinning al-Ghazali's taxonomy is a fundamental division between beneficial and non-beneficial forms of knowledge. The test of whether a given topic of study is beneficial concerns the extent to which it supports and is congruent with Islamic principles.<sup>88</sup> In practice, this results in memorisation of sacred texts and their

<sup>85</sup> Shaw, 'Madrasa and Church', p. 219.

<sup>86</sup> e.g. Alkanderi, p. 104; Yasin and Jani, p. 4; and Shaw, 'Madrasa and Church', p. 219. For an example of this pattern in al-Ghazali's writing, see *Ihyā'*, bk. 1, p. 11ff.

<sup>87</sup> Shaw ('Madrasa and Church', p. 219) identifies this threefold categorisation and offers a list of older Islamic educational sources utilising this taxonomy including Abdul Latif Tibawi, 'Philosophy of Muslim Education', in *Education and Philosophy*, ed. by George Z. F. Bereday and Joseph Lauwerys (New York: World Books, 1957); A. S. Tritton, *Materials on Muslim Education in the Middle Ages*, (London: Luzac, 1957).

<sup>88</sup> Shaw, 'Madrasa and Church', p. 220.

interpretation being valued and given priority over understanding them. From the earliest stages of children's education, al-Ghazali held to the importance of both religious and non-religious studies, and would emphasise the benefits of maintaining balance between the two.<sup>89</sup>

### Considering al-Ghazali's Influence on Contemporary Arab Education

Finally, we return to the question of al-Ghazali's influence. With reference to al-Ghazali's influence on Islamic philosophy, Griffel advances Solomon Pines' argument that al-Ghazali's 'refutation' primarily rejected elements of Aristotelian ontology.<sup>90</sup> Islamic philosophy, however, draws on a much wider variety of sources, as Pines demonstrates, including not only Greek influences, but Persian, Oriental, and Indian sources of thought. Pines states that 'in its further development, it [Islamic philosophy] did not, as a rule, eliminate one of them; it led them to subsist side by side—or on different planes.'<sup>91</sup> Hoover offers an example of this through his explanation of two lesser known studies that demonstrate that Ibn Taymiyya's (d. 1328) thought draws significantly more on the philosophy of Ibn Rushd (d. 1198) and the logic of *kalam* than on al-Ghazali.<sup>92</sup> This pattern of including and integrating different or even conflicting views has been associated with more 'eastern' approaches to critical thinking,<sup>93</sup> and warrants further study of the diverse sources contributing to Islamic philosophy. Certainly al-Ghazali's contribution does not have the monopoly once thought.

The legacy of common interpretations of al-Ghazali continues, particularly with regard to Islamic educational thinking. In Nofal's exposition of al-Ghazali's educational theories, he lists a number of widely cited Islamic educational theorists and practitioners spanning five centuries who explicitly draw on al-Ghazali's educational thinking.<sup>94</sup> Tibawi demonstrates this influence in his claim that 'classical Arabic literature contains no theory of education more authoritative, systematic and comprehensive than that bequeathed by al-Ghazali'.<sup>95</sup> Tibawi argues that 'with one notable exception, *practically all educational literature* down to the beginning of modernization in the nineteenth century is either inspired

<sup>89</sup> Alkanderi, p. 104.

<sup>90</sup> Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, p. 6.

<sup>91</sup> Solomon Pines, 'Some Problems of Islamic Philosophy', in *Greek Philosophy and the Arabs: Texts and Studies*, ed. by Fuat Sezgin (Frankfurt a.M.: Institute for the History of Arabic-Islamic Science at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University, 2000), 2, 80 (pp. 80ff).

<sup>92</sup> Jon Hoover, 'Perpetual Creativity in the Perfection of God: Ibn Taymiyya's Hadith Commentary on God's Creation of This World', *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 15.3 (2004), 287-329 (p. 291).

<sup>93</sup> See Richard Nisbett, *The Geography of Thought: How Asians and Westerners Think Differently...and Why* (New York: Free Press, 2003); Nicola Knight and Richard Nisbett, 'Culture, Class and Cognition: Evidence from Italy', *Journal of Cognition and Culture*, 7.3 (2007), 283-91.

<sup>94</sup> Nofal, p. 533.

<sup>95</sup> Tibawi, *Islamic Education*, p. 39.

by his [al-Ghazali's] writings or directly derived from them'.<sup>96</sup> Tibawi's affinity for seeing al-Ghazali's influence on Islamic education is not unique. Shah highlights a number of contemporary Islamic educationalists debating the ontology and epistemology of Islamic education who still draw on the early Islamic philosophers, especially al-Farabi and al-Ghazali, as authoritative references for their positions.<sup>97</sup> Alkanderi points to al-Ghazali's educational thinking reflected in a number of modern Muslim educationalists.<sup>98</sup> It seems that, at a minimum, interpretations of al-Ghazali continue to be widely influential in Islamic education.

A key consideration remains concerning the nature of al-Ghazali's influence on education. Nakosteen argues that the balanced curriculum characteristic of early Islamic education was lost after al-Ghazali, stating, 'Curriculum became formal, fixed, traditional, religious, dogmatic, backward-looking. It encouraged static minds and conformity. It became authoritarian and essentialist.'<sup>99</sup> Both Stone and Hilgendorf reflect this perspective, pointing to the closing of *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) and the apparent blind acceptance of *taqlid* (tradition) that followed al-Ghazali.<sup>100</sup> Hilgendorf recognises that this seems to be a misunderstanding by these later Islamic educationalists of al-Ghazali's progressive stages of development in education. Where al-Ghazali held memorisation and habituation as only the first steps of educational growth, those who followed have often understood these as the primary methods of education.<sup>101</sup> In the encounter with modernity, a diversity of educational approaches within Islam developed.<sup>102</sup> Sadaalah demonstrates that, in contrast to traditionalism, the fundamentalist orientation in Islamic education rejects al-Ghazali. Yet fundamentalism does so, drawing on Ibn Taymiyyah's use of Avicennian rationality,<sup>103</sup> and with the intent to liberate Muslims to interpret without the need for consulting centuries of scholarly tradition following al-Ghazali.<sup>104</sup> Even still, as Nofal notes, al-Ghazali was named as the primary resource for a major curriculum revision at al-Azhar in the nineteenth century.<sup>105</sup>

<sup>96</sup> Tibawi, *Islamic Education*, p. 41, emphasis added.

<sup>97</sup> Shah, *Education*, [Kindle locations 423-429].

<sup>98</sup> Alkanderi (p. 7) lists the following: Al-Barjis, 1983; Al-Sawi, 1999; Al-Zabidi, n.d.; Shafshaq, 1980; Dakhil Allah, 1996; Durant, 1950; Tibawi, 1972; and others.

<sup>99</sup> Nakosteen, p. 57.

<sup>100</sup> Hilgendorf, p. 69; Stone, p. 319.

<sup>101</sup> Hilgendorf, p. 69.

<sup>102</sup> Sherin Sadaalah, 'Islamic Orientations and Education', in *Educational Strategies among Muslims in the Context of Globalization: Some National Case Studies*, ed. by Holger Daun and Geoffrey R. Walford, v. 3 (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

<sup>103</sup> That is, the approach of Ibn Sina, who wrote the infamous refutation to al-Ghazali's *Tahafut*, entitled *Tahafut al-tahafut* (*The Incoherence of Incoherence*).

<sup>104</sup> Jonathan A. C. Brown, 'Is Islam Easy to Understand or Not?: Salafis, the Democratization of Interpretation and the Need for the Ulema', *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 26.2 (2015), 117-44.

<sup>105</sup> Nofal, pp. 529-32. This 'restoration' sought to demonstrate that scientific inquiry was not contradictory to religion, based on al-Ghazali's writings.

While it is important to acknowledge the diversity of influences shaping Islamic education, this does not negate al-Ghazali's presence and significant role in shaping Islamic education. The key point to remember regarding al-Ghazali's influence has two components. Firstly, we must recognise that Islamic philosophy, including educational thinking, should not be summarised as simply a repetition and elaboration of al-Ghazali alone. Secondly, it would be a mistake to not acknowledge the profound and ongoing influence that the interpretation of his work has had on Islamic education.

In this section, I have traced the significance of al-Ghazali's concept of the relationship between faith and reason in his philosophy of education. For al-Ghazali, acquisition of knowledge has doxological, soteriological, and eschatological value. Outcomes such as remembering, submission, and obedience take priority over individual inquiry and reflection. His dichotomy between beneficial and non-beneficial knowledge prioritises gaining knowledge of sacred texts above all. While acknowledging that al-Ghazali is not the sole source shaping Islamic education, his influence is and continues to be significant with dominant orientations of Islamic education in the Middle East. With this insight in mind, I want to turn to consider some implications of al-Ghazali's influence for Arab Christian theological education.

## **Implications for Theological Education in Arab-Muslim Contexts**

My interest in studying al-Ghazali develops from my own participation in educating Arab evangelical faith leaders for effective ministry in Arab-Muslim contexts, where the dominant patterns of teaching, learning, and doing theology are inevitably shaped by cultural concepts of education, knowledge, and the relationship between faith and reason. The vast majority of literature guiding the development of theological education develops in contexts where Islamic concepts of education are not dominant. Yet the task of forming leaders for ministry in Arab-Muslim contexts certainly differs from contexts where Islam is not the dominant 'other'. Having traced al-Ghazali's concept of faith and reason in his philosophy of education, in this final section I will explore some initial implications for Arab Christian theological education.

In one comparative study of Muslim and Christian religious education in the Levant, Shaw argues that understanding Islamic religious education 'helps clarify and illuminate the practice of Christian education in the local

evangelical community'.<sup>106</sup> While his study did not seek out causal links between Muslim education and Arab evangelical theology, certain features of religious education in Arab evangelical churches seemed to indicate the plausibility of at least some indirect influence.<sup>107</sup> Arab churches in the study tended to express very conservative views on Scripture, resembling a dictation theory of revelation.<sup>108</sup> Shaw also observed binary valuations of their prioritisation of religious educational topics,<sup>109</sup> as well as high prioritisation placed on Bible memorisation.<sup>110</sup> In the eight years I have been ministering in Arab churches and theological education, I have observed a hesitancy to study controversial or difficult theological topics with youth and young adults. These topics were perceived as too difficult and therefore unimportant and non-essential. In my own teaching, I find many of my students initially have difficulty when I do not offer rational explanations for the profound mysteries of Christian faith. While there are a number of other influences possibly contributing to these dynamics, we cannot ignore the correspondence with features commonly attributed to al-Ghazali's educational thinking. The apparent relationship suggests that efforts to develop theological education in contexts where traditional Islamic education is dominant ought to carefully evaluate the theological significance of educational practices in that setting.

Another implication raised by Sabra concerns the interaction between western theological education and traditional Arab society.<sup>111</sup> Both theological methodology and content in much of Arab theological education draws on the logic and tools of modernity. Protestant theology and theological method, especially, is fundamentally shaped by individualism and criticism of absolute authority.<sup>112</sup> This kind of critique is emphatically rejected in the traditionalism that develops after al-Ghazali. Within al-Ghazali's educational system, the use of reflective inquiry was reserved for only a few, particularly gifted scholars, and only at the very highest stages of education. To what extent does critical reflection facilitate the task of, or is it necessary to, Christian theological education?<sup>113</sup> The question raised by

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<sup>106</sup> Perry Shaw, 'Muslim Education: An Introduction to Philosophy, Curriculum, and Methodology with Reflections on Its Impact on the Evangelical Churches of the Arab Levant' (unpublished doctoral research, Pacific College of Graduate Studies, 1995), p. 46.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., pp. 43-44.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>111</sup> George Sabra, 'The Challenges of Theological Education in the Middle East', *International Review of Mission*, 89 (2000), 70-75 (p. 71).

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Current thinking in theological education is reflected in the following by Charles Wood: 'The aim of theological education ... is not to form Christians, but to form the habit of critical reflection on one's formation. It is not to mediate the content of the Christian tradition, but to equip one for theological reflection upon the Christian tradition.' from 'Theological Education and Education for Church

Sabra and highlighted by this study of al-Ghazali suggests that further research is needed on how to develop practices of theological reflection for ministry that are effective within traditional societies. Might practices such as storytelling and Scripture interpretation explained through rehearsing the lives of saints and prophets hold potential?

The educational expectations that inform the teaching and learning of theology are another implication of al-Ghazali's educational philosophy. Both faculty and students come to the act of teaching and learning in theological education with certain expectations informing their experience of that act. When their agendas differ, the resulting learning may take unintended turns. For example, Arab theology students with educational backgrounds shaped by traditional Islamic education may give more normative weight to the historical theology of figures in Christian history than is intended by an instructor trained in a non-Arab setting. When I, as a teacher, task students with rehearsing fairly the arguments of an early church heretic as a heuristic, rhetorical device, in my mind I am helping my students get inside the early church debates. In the learning experience of some students, I may be habituating them in erroneous belief. At least minimally, being aware of the possibility of differing senses of the normativity of the various sources of theology because of differing educational backgrounds allows an explicit dialogue about them to take place.

The final implication I want to raise concerns how students, and perhaps faculty also, approach the practice of theological reflection, which has come to be central to the task of missional theological education.<sup>114</sup> Theological reflection guides students through a process of thick analysis of both their experiences in society and the traditional sources for Christian theology, bringing the two into critical dialogue with the purpose of transforming action. As a form of critical reflection, theological reflection relies on cognitive processes of critical thinking and reflective judgment on context and text. While this point needs further analysis, it appears that al-Ghazali's educational concepts correspond to more eastern, synthetic approaches to critical thinking and reflection discussed in recent research on cognition and culture.<sup>115</sup> Al-Ghazali asserted the unity of knowledge and seemingly holistic, integrated, action-oriented education. In some sense, al-

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Leadership', in *Theological Perspectives on Christian Formation: A Reader on Theology and Christian Education*, ed. by Jeff Astley, Leslie J. Francis, and Colin Crowder (Leominster: Gracewing, 1996), p. 310.

<sup>114</sup> Robert Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education: Exploring a Missional Alternative to Current Models* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999); Darren Cronshaw, 'Reenvisioning Theological Education, Mission and the Local Church', *Mission Studies*, 28.1 (2011), 91-115; Darren Cronshaw, 'Reenvisioning Theological Education and Missional Spirituality', *Journal of Adult Theological Education*, 9.1 (2012), 9-27; Perry Shaw, *Transforming Theological Education* (Carlisle: Langham, 2014); Rupen Das, *Connecting Curriculum with Context: Handbook for Context Relevant Curriculum Development in Theological Education* (Carlisle: Langham, 2015).

<sup>115</sup> See Nisbett, *The Geography of Thought*; Knight and Nisbett, 'Culture, Class and Cognition'.

Ghazali's approach to education may correspond at points to feminist patterns of theological reflection.<sup>116</sup> On the other hand, the interpretation of al-Ghazali has certainly encouraged resistance to critical inquiry, synthetic or otherwise, of the sources of faith. To what extent might al-Ghazali's framework either promote or prohibit the kinds of critical reflection underpinning Christian theological reflection?

## Conclusion

I have argued that al-Ghazali's concept of the relationship between faith and reason has implications for evangelical theological education in Arab contexts. After locating al-Ghazali in his historical-philosophical context, I identified al-Ghazali's concept of the relationship between faith and reason: namely that the two are compatible methods for knowing, while emphasising the priority of revelation over reason. I then explored the expression of this concept in his educational philosophy. The elements of al-Ghazali's educational philosophy in my survey were seen to express his concept of the relationship between faith and reason, a formula that could be expressed as *habituated faith seeking understanding*. Though not the only influence, his philosophy of education has permeated Arab societies, having shaped concepts of education for centuries. The expression of this can be seen in systems of education that maintain traditional pedagogical and theological values.

Arab theological education continues to struggle with both traditional and progressive educational methodology inherited from the West that conflicts with traditional Arab societal values. Conversely, the educational philosophy and epistemology that underpin dominant Islamic approaches to education appear to be at odds with the liberating nature of Christian theological reflection. While recent studies of al-Ghazali suggest that perhaps he would not be opposed to reflective inquiry, interpretations of his thinking in Arab educational settings have contributed to devaluing critical reflection about matters of faith and doctrine. Ongoing development of theological education for Arab-Muslim contexts will require evaluation of the ways that Islamic educational features work with or against theological and educational values informing Christian evangelical theological reflection.

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<sup>116</sup> For example, Sarah Nell Bolton, 'Standing on Common Ground: Feminist Theological Methods as Applied in Christianity and Islam', *Modern Believing*, 44.1 (2003), 27-39.

## Book Reviews

Mary Raber, *Ministries of Compassion among Russian Evangelicals 1905-1929* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2016), 274 pages. ISBN: 978-1498280709.

Preaching, evangelism, or maybe publishing come to mind when considering some of the historical traits of Russian-speaking evangelicals. Mary Raber intends to add another word to consider which is *miloserdie*, the Russian word for 'compassion'. In her recently published work, *Ministries of Compassion among Russian Evangelicals 1905-1929*, she traces the ministries of compassion across the Russian-speaking evangelicals' formative years known as the 'Golden Age' of their religious freedom. Researching some of the key figures in Russian-speaking evangelical history, she discovered that they and their colleagues have poured sacrificial amounts of time, money, and energy into alleviating the suffering of others. She traces these efforts along three patterns: aid within the community, urban rescue ministry, and the establishment of economic communities.

Raber begins with an examination of the aid provided to pastors and missionaries under the leadership of D.I. Mazaev, V.G. Pavlov, and V.V. Ivanov. From there she moves on to the urban ministries of W.A. Fettler who preached revival and cared for those displaced as a result of industrialisation. She then explores how foreign and domestic aid were used to care for the wounded, the orphaned, the displaced, and the starving during Russia's civil war and years following. Finally, she highlights I.S. Prokhanov's dream to establish economic communities to eradicate poverty as a witness of the power of the gospel to change lives and society.

Preaching the gospel is arguably the primary trait of the Russian-speaking evangelicals, but Raber proves that within their preaching there has been the unchallengeable assumption that the gospel is the power that transforms lives and mitigates human suffering. The people, the attempts, and the ministries she highlights faced tremendous challenges and this makes their stories insightful and inspiring for today's world. The book is a result of Raber's doctoral research and it is chronologically structured, well researched, footnoted, and indexed. Her fresh research and translation of underused sources successfully fills the void that other writers have mentioned, but only to say that it is an area that needs further research. Raber has provided us with an excellent work which rounds out our understanding of the dynamics of the formative years of the Russian-speaking evangelicals and provides us with examples to consider for our world today.

**Reviewed by Gregory Nichols**

*Missiology: An Introduction to the Foundations, History, and Strategies of World Missions*, ed. by John Mark Terry, 2nd edn (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2015), 768pages. ISBN: 978-1433681516.

This is a solid yet unremarkable introductory textbook on missions. As long as readers appreciate what they are and are not getting when they pick up this lengthy book, then all is well and good. However, this was, arguably, a missed opportunity. Let me explain.

This is the second edition of this publication, with numerous rewrites and chapter changes. It is comprehensive in its detailing of the biblical basis of missions, the theology of missions, and the history of missions. There is a thorough analysis of principles and practices and, for anyone considering a future in missions or for an undergraduate study of these topics, this book offers a broad look at many important topics within one volume. More than thirty contributors, from a variety of different disciplines, provide insights from their own research and experiences. The last section, entitled Applied Missiology, has important chapters on such issues as urban missions and business as mission.

Nevertheless, the book is unashamedly for a North American readership. One chapter is entitled Missions in North America and another on Strategies for Ethnic Ministries is almost exclusively devoted to the North American context. Readers should be aware that almost all of the writers have served as missionaries in North America or are North Americans who have worked internationally. I think this is a great shame. There are numerous mission authors from the global south who, I believe, would have dealt with these chapters differently. As the Australian, Graham Hill, wrote: 'The future of the global church isn't found in the United States. How could we even think that, when all the exponential growth of the church is in the Majority World?' Also, within its pages, one gets the impression that there is an emphasis on looking back, but not much which looks forward. This results in little creative or original missional thinking.

Thus, this book sits alongside other introductory books on missions and certainly holds its own. However, as a European who is in awe of what God is doing globally, this book leaves me rather dispassionate.

**Reviewed by Phil Grasham**

Malcolm Patten, *Leading a Multicultural Church* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2016), 176 pages. ISBN: 978-0281075041.

Malcolm Patten's book *Leading a Multicultural Church* is a timely contribution to the literature and practice of emerging church life in many parts of Britain and Europe. The refugee crisis and the seemingly large influx of migrants has spurred a debate on what it means to be British, European, Dutch, German, or Swedish, and whether there is a place for multiculturalism in our societies. This debate has not bypassed the church. In this book, the author draws on both his experience as a pastor and on his doctoral research.

Patten starts by laying a foundation from the Old and New Testaments, showing that God's people were multicultural communities; that God's intention was never for a mono-ethnic community but one that would embrace the diversity of the nations. He then discusses the concept of multiculturalism and contrasts it with the idea of assimilation, especially when dealing with migrants. He draws on the work of Lord Bhikhu Parekh, the British political philosopher who states that identity is three dimensional – personal, social, and human, stating that these three identities 'are inseparable and flow into each other'. Grasping this enables local churches to celebrate the uniqueness of individuals and yet build on all that binds us together in a common humanity. Patten then addresses the difficult issues of overcoming prejudices and of racism. He expands social psychologist Gordon Allport's four conditions necessary to overcome racism and looks at the implications for the local church. Finally, he looks at the implications of multiculturalism in four dimensions of the church – approaches to worship, pastoral challenges, developing diverse leadership teams, and missions. Each chapter is filled with practical advice and suggestions.

This is an extremely valuable resource for any pastor facing the challenges of leading a multicultural congregation. If there is one weakness in the book, it is that Patten does not discuss the different types of multicultural congregations, though he refers to them throughout. Early in the book, in the definition section, he does differentiate between multicultural, multiracial, and multiethnic churches, and later he refers to the possibility of hosting an expatriate congregation. While there are overlaps, migrant churches, ethnic churches, international churches, multicultural churches, and multiracial churches have their distinctives, and a discussion of these would have been helpful.

The book is grounded in a proper understanding of the biblical narrative and in good theology. It is a timely contribution to understanding how a pluralistic society is impacting the church.

**Reviewed by Rupen Das**

*Homiletical Theology in Action: The Unfinished Theological Task of Preaching*, ed. by David Schnasa Jacobsen (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2015), 202 pages. ISBN: 978-1498207836.

This is a book not so much about the theology of preaching but more about the way in which theological understandings shape what preachers do, particularly as they engage in the process of preparing sermons. It consists of a series of chapters by a variety of authors who accordingly bring a range of individual perspectives to this task. It is the second volume of an intended series on Homiletical Theology based around a consultation on the theme.

Following on from the above, one of the particular features of this book is methodological. It seeks to treat the whole task of preaching as thoroughly theological. In doing so it approaches preaching from the perspective of practical theology. In turn the contributions are organised according to the methodological approaches of the writers: Descriptive, Confessional, and Analytical respectively. This interaction between methodology and theology is interesting for those who consider methodology to be a theological matter, and to dismiss this feature would be to somewhat miss the point of the collection.

In the descriptive mode there are chapters on sermon preparation in the light of different theological horizons, street art, and the phenomenological method of Edward Farley. In the confessional mode, there is a chapter which argues for a greater priority to be given to the Spirit and another which argues for the gospel of promise as the starting point for homiletical work. The contributions in the analytical mode engage with the very project of Homiletical Theology and explore the limits of this unfinished task in relation to the bible and ‘uncomfortable’ themes such as judgement.

There are some very thought provoking chapters in this book, although those with a more evangelical theology will struggle with some of the undergirding theological assumptions. At times some of the contributions have the feel of an ‘insider’ conversation. This said, the emphasis on preachers as those who are participants and producers of meaning, rather than simply those who apply such meaning, requires thoughtful engagement by preachers in all traditions.

**Reviewed by Stuart Blythe**